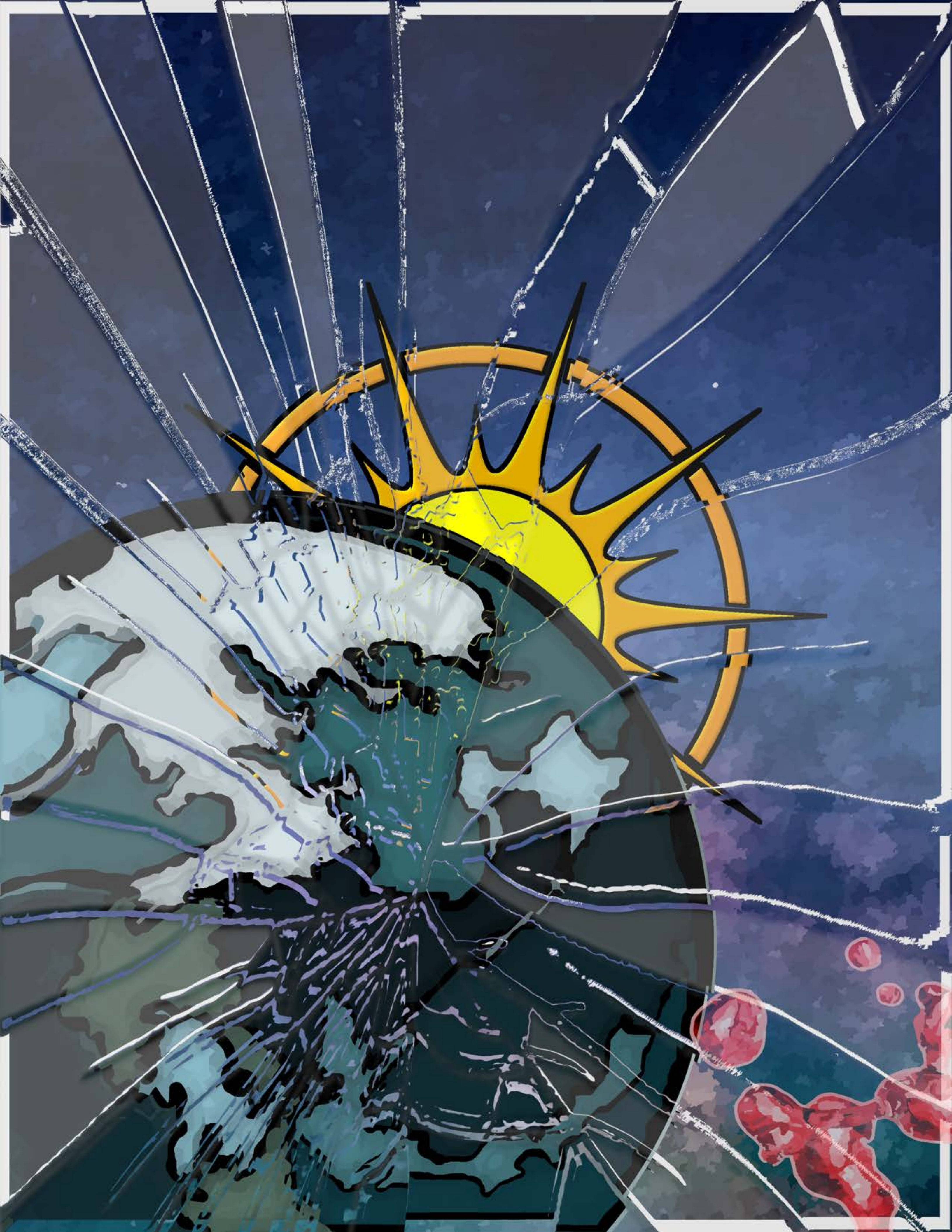
Changeling: Countless Dreams

Storytellers Vault
Third Edition



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Disclaimer

The concepts and people described within this book have passed into fantasy. Any resemblance to real people, places, or ideas is incidental.

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Changeling: Countless Dreams

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Introduction

"The promise of the Guidestone united the entire population.
Every mind became focused on the true origin of our people.
Every effort on the construction of the ship that would seek it out amongst the stars."

-Fleet Intelligence, **Homeworld**

What Am I Reading?

Changeling: Countless Dreams is a Changeling: the Dreaming 20th Anniversary Edition expansion that aims to fill in some of the gaps that have existed since its first edition. Countless tells the story of aliens from distant parts of unexplored space, drawn out of their natural state, and trapped in a sci-fi Dreaming Realm they call Subspace. This book establishes the conflict between the Prophets of Harmony and the Symbiosis Collective, as well as supplying four different Countless Clades to use either in a Countless game or as a bit of spice for a more traditionally focused Changeling story. Countless includes an expanded character creation and customization system, heavily influenced by Dark: Ages Fae's Features system, as well as a large collection of game artifacts (including freeholds, chimera, treasures, and a reimagined sci-fi Realms system), prelude missions, and a brief fiction piece to help establish the book's hopepunk mood.

Hopepunk

A Techno-Fantasy

In a world that seems designed to wear you down, rob you of joy, and turn you into a drone having something to believe in and having the audacity to enjoy anything is a rebellion. One of Changeling: the Dreaming's thematic hearts is the core thesis of hopepunk: Keep fighting; no matter what. Banality

Why Create [Yet Another] Changeling Setting?

The canon setting for Changeling: the Dreaming is a not-entirely-truthful dream of the past. In earlier editions anything that had a science or technology feel was likely to be banal, though that has softened somewhat in C20. Changeling has always been a spiritual sister to Mage: the Ascension for me, and Changeling's nearly total depiction of futuristic things being terrible has never set well. Mage has struggled with this as well--the Technocracy are nominally badguys--but two traditions are written as being heavily influenced by beauty and potential of science (or is that the other way around?). Changeling, on the other hand, has the Knockers, the oft-forgotten Thought Crafters and… that's about it. This project, I hope, will help storytellers and players bring bold new dreams and unforgettable nightmares to life.

is going to have you. What you do before that moment is the last chance for your fae soul to shine and maybe leave the World of Darkness a little less grim and dark for the next changeling (or even your next life).

Changeling: Countless Dreams is an expansion that builds on that hopepunk theme. Trapped on the Surface of the Anthropic Singularity, the Countless are ancient travelers from beyond the Horizon hiding within human bodies. The Countless are threatened on all sides by rising Radiation levels, the siren's call of the Black, discovery by the World of Darkness' other inhumans, and a civil war between different Countless factions. Will your Countless be able to put aside their differences and become the breakthrough that finally shakes the World of Darkness free from its stagnation or will they be yet more parasites enriching themselves at the expense of the world? How will they compromise and who will they sacrifice to change the world?

For as long as humanity has existed we have looked at the world around us and sought to make it familiar by giving it names and telling stories about it. The ancient Fae inspired stories about the gods of nature, hero-kings, and shapechanging ancestors. When the the Autumn World and the Dreaming were Sundered the Fae who survived hid themselves in the Glamour of those stories. Similar to the Kiths, the Countless Clades descend from the names and stories created by human science. The Kepler Space Telescope taught us that stars hosting planets are common. With so many possible Earthlike places in the universe, it no longer seems unlikely that life emerged elsewhere. To the vast majority of humanity this means nothing. But for a few Extraordinary Citizens traveling beyond Biospheric Space remains a fantasy. Kessler Syndrome threatens to cut us off from space for generations. War, famine, climate change, and other Earthbound concerns compete for limited government funding and international attention. It seems almost too much for ordinary people to hope that one day they might travel beyond the fields we know to strange new worlds.

But ordinary people have the audacity to look up, down, and all around themselves with wonder.

Inspiration

For more sci-fantasy inspiration, there are the usual suspects; Star Trek, Star Wars, Dune, Cowboy Bebop, Firefly, The Expanse, etc. as well as anything in the cyberpunk or solarpunk genres. The ancient (at least in the context of video games) Commander Keen series by ID Software provide a good touchstone for remembering what kids' fantasies about space are like. The forgotten Edisonade genre as well as early 20th century space fiction can be good for coming up with outlandish machines, creatures, and getting in touch with the kind of colonialist horror that unthinkingly privileged people bring to new (to them anyway) spaces. The NicoNicoDouga video Subterrenean Stars by MinusT provides a good visual reference for what combining high-fantasy and high-tech looks like, featuring a team of four witches working together to defeat a sun-faerie with the ability to control heat, gravity, and nuclear power.

For more real-world inflected stories the news that will provide the some of the best inspiration. Look to green tech startups and their sometimes bizarre missions, any conflict between settlers and indigenous people over resource protection, and government agencies' contests for grants (NASA's design and engineering contests were a source for elements of many of the missions chapter preludes). Sciencesplainers like PBS Spacetime, PBS Eons, Journey to the Microcosmos, Scishow, and Seeker as well as more usual documentaries like Nature, Nova, and Natural Geographic about nature and physical sciences can provide unexpected inspiration (the Oppies and the Ancestors were born from watching documentaries).

"World of Darkness" Recommended Reading

Changeling: Countless Dreams relies upon material from Changeling: the Dreaming 20th Anniversary Edition and The Book of Freeholds.

The first edition Changeling: the Dreaming Player's Guide is strongly recommended. Any and all of the Mage: the Ascension technocracy books are recommended, as well as the Virtual Adepts and Sons of Ether Tradition Books, and The Digital Web 2.0.

Universal Translator

Abduction is the process by which a Countless ushers a human into the Holographic Universe. Unlike Enchantment, its Kithain counterpart, Abduction relies upon scientific processes including mindaltering drug injections, hypnosis, and psychological reprogramming.

Adaptations are inherent abilities and powers that make the Countless better suited than humans to their Subspatial homelands. Unlike Mutations and Refinements, Adaptations are invisible and do not contribute to the Joined being's Superficial or Holographic appearance. Adaptations are the Countless version of Birthrights.

Allegiance denotes for whom the Countless fights. Whether that's Concordia, the Nunnehi Nations, the Symbiosis Collective, the Prophets of Harmony, or another group is up to the player. This replaces Court for the Countless, and in mixed games determines what level of the Fae Realm the character falls under.

Anthropic Hostility is situationally generated Radiation. Typically created when unmodified humans observe obviously inhuman abilities and powers. Self-Hostility is a similar concept that describes when a Countless' human half generates Radiation. These events are similar to Banality Triggers.

Anthropic Radiation (or simply Radiation) is how the Countless paradigm interprets the force of Banality. Dots represent the amount of inescapable irradiation a Countless has been poisoned with, while points (squares) track current exposure. As with Banality, 10 temporary points automatically convert into a new permanent dot.

The Anthropic Tidal Event (or the Tidal Event) was a series of Radiation waves that began in 1957 increasing in both frequency and intensity until the Subspatial Apocalypse in 1969. The Tidal Event flooded every known Realm with Radiation, destroying Countless civilization and forcing the Invasion of the Surface. The Tidal Event has similarities to both the Shattering and the Resurgence.

Challenges are the downsides of Adaptations. Challenges are abilities and needs that were adaptive in Subspace, but are troublesome on the Surface. These maladaptive adaptations are the Countless version of Frailties.

Ego represents a character's ability to resist attacks and insults to their identity. It also allows Joined to engage in extreme effort. Ego is identical to Willpower in mortals. For clarity's sake, this text refers to permenant points of Ego as Ego and temporary points of Ego as will or willpower. Countless society is still struggling with the development of individuality, and treats its manifestations similarly to how Changelings treat Glamour and Banality- unique, strange, powerful, and alarming. Ego and Will are extinguished by the Harmonic Truth.

Legacies denote the competing human and alien desires a Joined being being experiences. These provide the character with ways to reify their identities, replenishing their Willpower and Zed.

Harmonic Truth (or simply the Truth), the Prophets of Harmony say, is understanding the true nature of reality. As a Countless is exposed to Truth they gain points of Truth, starting on the righthand side of the Will track and traveling left. Where a point of Truth encounters a point of Will, the point of Willpower is lost and cannot be regained until that point of Truth is purged. As with Banality, ten points of Truth automatically convert into a dot of Truth (which also replaces the rightmost available nonTruth Ego dot). Truth is the Countless paradigm's interpretation of Nightmare.

Joined (also Earthbound, Bound, and Implanted) are Countless who've undergone Implantation and Joining procedures to survive life on the Surface. Identical to "Changeling Way" and "Changeling" in other works. Countless prefer to use the term "Countless" to describe themselves, except in situations where the distinction between Unbound and Joined Countless beecome relevant.

Low-Emitters are Humans who are compatible with the Dream that gave birth to the Countless. Though the Countless do not generally use Human-centric Epiphanies, these humans are otherwise similar to Dreamers for the Kithain.

Motion describes a character's worldview and their role on the Surface. Motion, Legacy, and Ego together exert complicated tensions on a Countless' life. Equivalent to Kithain Seemings.

Mutations (also Refinements, Permutations, and Edges) are clearly inhuman elements of Joined xenoforms. Mutations grant the Countless abilities that seem miraculous or impossible to unmodified humans. Observing their use provokes Anthropic Hostility from Humans.

Origin denotes which Subspatial Realm Countless are best suited to. This provides narrative flavor and a core to focus character development (both mechanical and narrative) on.

Tells (infrequently Atavisms) are bits of the Countless' true nature that unmodified humans can perceive. These quirks are always unusual, but never completely impossible for a human to have. Observing an atavistic Tell might inspire curiosity or disgust in a Human, but never Anthropic Hostility. Tells are similar to the Slipped Seeming Flaw that some Changelings live with.

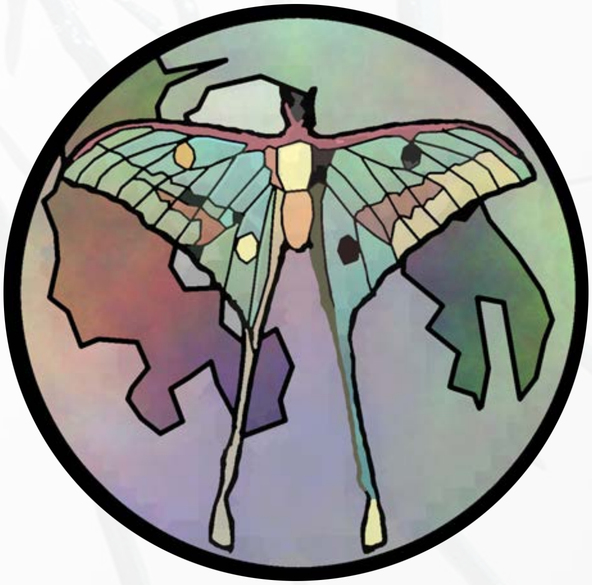
Will (also Willpower) in this text refers to a point of Ego. This is noted here as standard as World of Darkness uses "Willpower" to describe temporary and permanent points of Willpower.

Unbound is the name for Countless not Implanted within a host. It is generally used in medical or historical contexts to highlight the differences between Joined Countless and the Countless who came before.

Unmodified Humans are humans who

are not currently Abducted by the Countless. Identical to "unenchanted mortal" in standard Changeling.

Zed (Zero Point Energy or ZPE) dots reflect capacity for Countless to store this lifegiving energy and points (squares) indicate current amount possessed. A dot can be converted into ten temporary points. Zed is extinguished by Anthropic Radiation. This is the Countless' version of Glamour.



Kate Miller & Hohoeapbess in

Goodbye Galaxy!

Kate checked her notes again. In, in, around, in, around, in, in, around, around. Her hand cramped.

“How long have I been weaving for?” she asked no one in particular.

“I’m sorry,” No One answered.

“Who’s there?!”

“It’s hard, you know? Having so much to do. But you’re nearly done.”

“Who are you?”

“I’m here to take you away,” it said. “If you want.”

“To where?” Kate looked around. The ship was a mess. Wire from the computer was everywhere. Her hammock hung from the ceiling, neglected. The halogens she’d set up kept everything brightly lit. Even with the mess there was nowhere for an intruder to hide.

“Anywhere!” a baby monitor tucked away in a box of junk parts crackled. “We’ll go together. We’ll have adventures. You’ll … well, you might forget.”

“Forget what?”

“Good things. Bad things. Unremarkable things. It’s hard to say,” a radio in the ship’s control console chirped. “I forgot things. I used to have a brother. Together we would make wonderful things. I forgot him. But you’ll do, I think.”

“How do we go?”

“Take my hand.”

Kate felt No One's hand brush her fingers. She gripped it. Kate felt a warmth spreading through her hand and up her arm. Her cramp felt worse and somehow less urgent.

“Where are you?” She called.

“I’m with you,” Kate said. “I’ve been with you for all of your lives. We’re going to make so many wonderful things!”

Ethyl’s pager would not stop going off.

“Ethyl,” Sam hissed. “Turn it off!”

Ethyl pulled it out of her pocket. The light from its backlit

LCD screen blinded the couple sitting behind them. Without warning she stood up and ran out of the cinema.

Sam raced after her; catching her by the bus terminal.

“What’s going on?” she puffed.

Massive Zed surge, she Signed with one hand. With the other she manipulated the scanner’s Holographic interface. *It has all the hallmarks of an Emergence.*

“Where is it? What is it?” Sam peered at Ethyl's Device.

The Collective doesn’t have a Joining taking place nearby. She walked a slow, widening, circle. *If we get data from multiple positions maybe I can triangulate the origin. Hopefully it isn’t moving.*

“If it’s not us,” Sam said. “Do you think it’s the Prophets?”

Together, they blasted through their ship's preflight checklist. They found that their hands very nearly kept up with their inspiration. The spirit turned Kate’s Dreams from the excavation site into practical knowledge of lost crafts. Kate’s engineering education turned the spirit’s desires into angles, alloys, and Formulae. They didn’t think of themselves as separate creatures anymore--Kate’s thoughts flowed into the spirit and the spirit’s magic flowed back into her.

They didn’t stop moving until they finally ran out of work to do on the ship’s core systems.

“What do we do now?” they asked themself. “We Name it.”

Sam pulled up to a house with fresh, exposed, insulation on the outer walls. The sun had just gone down. Though Sam wasn’t great at Dowsing, she could feel the Deep Tide building nearby.

“You’re sure this is it?” she asked rhetorically.

None of these readings make any sense, Ethyl Signed. *But if we accept that this is crazy, then yes. I’m sure.*

They got out of her little car.

A woman neither of them had seen stepped into a nearby streetlamp’s illumination.

“Excuse me,” she had a husky voice. “May I assume you were drawn by the Chrysalis?”

“The what?” Sam asked.

The woman gestured with her fan toward the house. The fan was an old thing, made of dark feathers and lacquered wood.

Ethyl pointed her scanner at the stranger. *She has high Zed levels. She's one of us?*

"Dust it, Ethyl. *Look* at her, of course she is."

"Ava Littlewing" she inclined her head.

Now that Ethyl was paying attention to her she saw the Tells on this Ava's ears and eyes. The scanner revealed that the fan hid significant Holographic ordinance.

Forgotten? Ethyl asked.

"Samarskite," Sam said before jerking her thumb at Ethyl, "Ethylene. She doesn't talk."

The ground shook and Holographic light and smoke rose from behind the house. Ethyl's scanner screeched.

"Earthquake?" Sam crouched down.

Zed spike!

"Strangers, we have precious little time to intervene before this Dream Dance goes out of control." Ava said. "Whatever else we may be to each other, let us put that aside to help this child."

A sleek Holographic ship the size of a semi-trailer lifted off from behind the house.

"A Freehold?"

I'll Halo us up to it.

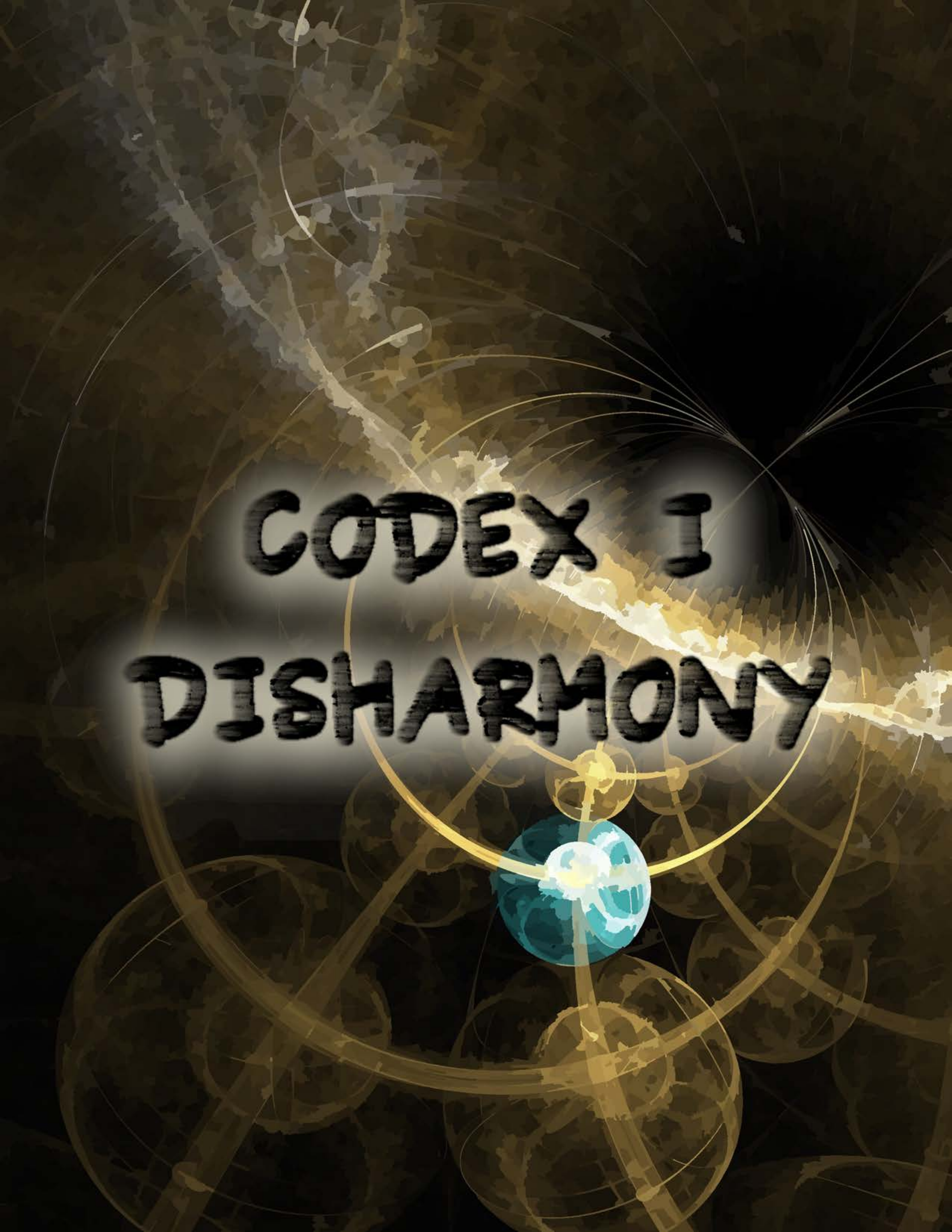
A shower of light erupted from Ethyl's body. When the Tide cleared, Ethyl's lithe figure had been replaced by her Xenoform: a squirming balloon ringed with waving tentacles and entirely too many eyes.

"No, don't-"

Ethyl snatched up both Sam and Ava with her tentacles and all three of them began to levitate toward the strange, spear-shaped, ship.

Captain Keen sat in the pilot's seat, flipping switches and twisting knobs. Her voidsuit felt like it had been made for her which, of course, it had. She pushed the record button on the tape deck that would serve as the ship's flight recorder. "Captain Kathryn Keen, mission 1, day 1:" she spoke. "Today will be a quick test flight of the Kodiak. I'm thinking … out to that asteroid and back. And then? Goodbye galaxy!"

CODEX I
DISHARMONY



A Brief Overview of Everything

*"A firestorm is consuming Subspace.
Significant Radiation and debris wave approaching.
Comms down."*

—Final Log Entry, Pyrean Solar Observatory

The First Star

Pre-History

The Countless' story begins with the opening of the Stelliferous Epoch. This was before Subspace and the Surface were divided. The Holographic Universe was dark and largely homogenous. Somewhere (the idea of "a place" didn't really exist yet) the early universe's cloud of hydrogen and energy was denser than elsewhere. That density attracted more matter and energy. Over time that place became distictly different from the rest of the early universe. The very first star was born here.

Even the oldest Countless have only scraps of Mists-eaten memories of this event, but Earthbound mythology buzzes about it. Stories tell that the first Countless were born from that explosion. The first Countless crawled out of the Dark, drawn like moths to the first star's light. The first Countless were sent by injured Harmony's Avatar to extinguish that abberation before it spread through the rest of Harmony. No Earthbound Countless can agree on which version of this story is correct but, they do agree that billions of years and innumerable stars later the Countless came to Sol.

Discovering Singularity

Colonizing Sol

Arriving at primordial Sol the Countless encountered Anthropic Radiation for the first time. As each invasion wave entered the heliosphere they were scattered through time, finally emerging from the Last Horizon's Dynamic Temporal Field into different periods of Sol's evolution. Irradiation forced them to shield themselves by taking on characteristics of the period they emerged into: Kites arrived as the Jovian planets were just being formed, the Silicates saw the birth of terrestrial worlds, and the Ancestors clothed themselves in the mantle of life itself. Each Clade of the Countless flourished soon after their arrival, only to fall into disarray as Sol's development continued & left the Countless, unwilling to adapt, behind.

The Pyrean Epoch

Countless Civilization

The epoch if high Countless Civilization was born from catastrophes. The birth of planets, and Jupiter's migration out of the inner solar system robbed stellar medium of the gasses the Kites needed to survive. Soon after Phaeton, the ur-Silicate and the planet that once orbitted between Jupiter and Mars, scattered Silicate fragments of itself throughout the Solar System. Forced into contact with each other for the first time, the two different Countless groups saw opportunity. They formed a number of local cultures, dedicated to their survival near planetary bodies. The Kites settled the atmospheres and the Silicates colonized the surfaces. As time passed, the various settlements consolidated into three unique civilizations: The Pyrean Empire, the Jovian Federation, and the Saturnine.

The Countless warred endlessly over territory, resources, and culture. In the crucible of conflict powerful, advanced, civilizations emerged. The collision of Theia and Gaea birthed the Earth and Luna. For reasons unknown to the Countless, this event released incredibly toxic amounts of Radiation into nearby Subspace, and the area was universally declared a hazard zone. As the Pyrean Wars ground on, life emerged from the Surface of the Earth, built its own civilizations, fought its own wars, and quietly instigated the destruction of all Subspatial life.

Tidal Event

1957-1969

Prior to the Anthropic Tidal Event, the Countless regarded the near-Earth realm as an unremarkable and inclimate region of Subspace. Humanity's domination of the Surface rendered it uninhabitable, and Anthropic Hostility left the few Countless who bothered to study the indigenous life highly Irradiated and outcast. Humanity's first tentative attempts to reach Subspace were attended by the births of two new Species of Countless. Absorbed by the wars at the edges of their empires, the established Countless failed to take note of the Tidal Event's first ripples or their new kin.

The rising tide of Radiation was too destructive for the Countless to ignore forever. During the turbulent 60s the Subspatial hazard zone surrounding the Surface metastasized, rendering huge swaths of every Subspatial Realm uninhabitable. Refugees flooded into distant outposts from the nearer-Earth regions, taxing resources and causing social unrest. The Countless were unable to stem the tide and Radiation spread throughout Subspace. The wide-ranging and complex logistic networks that had sustained the empires' growth collapsed under the strain.

Apocalypse

It Was the Summer of 1969

As with the histories of the first star, surviving accounts of the time during and immediately after the Tidal Event are confused and contradictory. Countless Temporal researchers suspect that both events caused, or were caused by, chaotic fluctuations in the Temporal Field —commonly known as Dynamic Time. What is certain is that the Tidal Event rendered Subspace uninhabitable. Countless were forced to fight each other for dwindling havens. The Apocalypse saw millions of Countless dead, empires pillaged, and their remains obliterated by unimaginable waves of Radiation. Today's survivors are those who fled the destruction to the one place they'd be safe from other Countless--the Surface.

Invasion

1969-1990

None of the refugees thought that the Surface world would be a paradise, but even the Tidal Event hadn't prepared them for the Surface's Radioactive onslaught. Cut off from what support there was in their old homes, a way to protect the Countless from lethal Anthropic Radiation was needed. Holographic substances were as susceptible to Irradiation as the

Countless themselves, and were therefore inappropriate. Legend has it that the first Joining was of a mad Chirurgeon who implanted their own Holographic essence into a human test subject. This solution: creating a new hybrid being from both a human Low-Emitter's body and a Countless' essence proved nearly perfect! The human form innoculated the Countless against fatal Irradiation, and the Countless essence augmented the human body with its inhuman abilities.

Earthbinding

1990-Present

Of course, any scientist knows that a study with a sample-size of one is terrifically flawed. As the Joining spread and more Countless underwent the process, glaring problems with the procedure emerged. The original process involved bathing the new creature in Zed to force the Countless within's re-emergence. This significantly harmed the Joined creature's long-term viability. This problem was solved by the development of tracking implants, allowing chirurgeons to keep eyes on dormant Countless as their new bodies healed from the Implantation procedure. As time ground on Countless born from both Forced and Natural Emergence techniques learned that their memories of the time before they were Implanted were slowly eroding. Often, newly Countless Emerged claimed to carry important information, orders, or to be high-ranking officials only to forget exactly what it was they were supposed to do by the time they finally got a hearing from the Symbiosis Collective or Prophets of Harmony's bureaucrats.

Facing this cultural identity crisis factions formed: The Symbiosis Collective eventually adopted the position that the Countless had become hybrid creatures so Subspace and the Surface (and by extension humanity itself) also needed to become mixed. A variety of fundamentalist Countless, disturbed by their new lives as Joined creatures, longed for their increasingly obscured past as masters of Subspace—this dissatisfaction gave birth to the Prophets of Harmony. Subsequent waves of Countless refugees continued to crash to the Surface from increasingly distant parts of Subspace. These desperate migrants accepted that the Joining was their only hope of survival, and before they knew what was happening they were conscripted by their chirurgeons into the cold-war between humanity, the Collectivists, and the Prophets.

Magical Cosmology

"What is the nature of Subspace?"

"Vast emptiness; nothing holy."

The Countless' Holographic Universe has important similarities and differences to the Chimerical Reality of traditional Changelings. The boundaries are roughly the same; Biospheric Space maps to the Autumn World and Subspace can be imagined as equivalent to the Dreaming. The Countless' Holographic Principle describes the differences between Holographic subjects and Surface subjects in ways that will be familiar to Changelings who navigate the distinctions between the Chimerical and Wyrd.

Unlike the Dreaming, Subspace is divided into not-entirely-discrete Realms. As a part of Subspace, the Superficial World sometimes coincides with its other Realms: Very high in the Earth's atmosphere is part of the Surface and part of the Heavens. Traveling deep enough into the Superficial oceans can lead to the Abyss. Giant squid in the darkness, fungal spores high in the atmosphere, anaerobic bacteria living deep in the Earth's crust all straddle the edges of the Superficial Biosphere and Subspace. Stranger still, at least to Surface changelings, Subspace's Realms can mingle with each other. The Shadow Biosphere is particularly prone to infiltrating other Realms: producing strange asteroid ecologies, impossible creatures living in the Earth's mantle, and even two of the Countless' Species.

The Waking World's infatuation with science and technology renders it more amenable to some of the Countless' powers, but more resistant to others. While accessing Subspace is a logical exercise (go up to the Heavens, go down to Hades, get wet to get to the Abyss, etc), logical and easy are very different things. Escaping the Surface into Subspace is generally more difficult for these techno-fae than the more traditional children of the Dreaming. changelings simply open a Trod and wander away down the nearest Silver Path. The Adhene have an Art all their own for breaching reality. The Countless' routes to Subspace follow technological (and some might argue Banal) narratives. Even the most well-understood (at least for humans) route to Subspace requires building and launching a rocket loaded with life-support and navigation equipment. Returning from Voidspace adds another complication: the ship has to be able to withstand the incredible stresses of re-enty. Some Countless Emerge from their Joining with access to Holographic wonders that allow reliable commerce between Subspace and the Surface. Most do not. Accessing the ruins of their homes in Subspace is the work of a lifetime for most.

The Earthbound Countless believe that once reliable access to Subspace is restored things would be as they were before the apocalypse. The few who have breached the Biospheric Horizon know the truth--Subspace is a shambles. Radiation leftover from the Tidal Event swirls and pools, contaminating almost everything. Dangerous waves of Harmonic Truth tear through the Realms from Beyond. The Countless elites wonder what will happen when the Earthbound learn that Subspace is no safer than the Surface?

While the children of Dream warred with each other over dwindling Dreamers the Countless refugees arriving on the Surface were forced to develop an entirely new Path to Epiphany for themselves. Prior to the Tidal Event the Countless drew Zed from the seemingly endless tides that flowed through Subspace. With no history of cultivating Dreamers the Countless retooled their traditional methods for sustaining themselves to work on the Surface. They built sprawling Zed Traps and refineries on the Surface to capture and purify the steady dribble of Unstable Dross that fell to Earth from Subspace.

That industry is enough to keep the Countless alive for now, but as the Tidal Event penetrates farther into Subspace and increasingly distant (and perhaps unknown) Countless are forced to Surface how long will it be before the Countless are again warring over scraps?

Biospheric Space

"'Don't you see?

Subspace will be so tidy once the Surface is destroyed.' Mari Poppins attached the advanced Icon to her hat and disappeared.

The Cluricahaun roared, 'All my stuff is there!'"

***—excerpt from* The Adventures of Abby Gale**

Rather than nebulous terms like "the Autumn World" or "Consensus Reality" the Countless prefer to think of their new home as being part of Superficial Reality. They mean this in the sense that those without Holographic perception see only the superficial layer of reality and also in the sense that the vast majority of it is made up of the surface of the planet Earth. The Surface is the part of the Holographic Universe that can sustain human life with minimal reliance on technology. Simply put, any place you, Reader, could travel to and survive for a reasonable amount of time with nothing more complicated than an oxygen tank is probably a part of Surface Reality.

The Biosphere (or more properly "Biospheric Space") is a similar but not entirely synonymous term. Biospheric Space extends beyond places that humans can comfortably live and encompasses places other sorts of life have emerged. Very generous Cosmologists include the Shadow Biosphere as a part of Biospheric Space, though this is a contentious point. The deep ocean, subterranean strata, and the high atmosphere are all capable of sustaining terrestrial life (but not necessarily human life) and therefore parts of Biospheric Space. That said, Biospheric Space and the Surface largely coincide. Life produced by Biospheric Space is almost always incapable of perceiving the greater Holographic

Surface Hazards

Environment	Typical Rads	Typical Harmonic Contamination
Surface (Industrial Waste Site)	8 – 10	0 – 1
Surface (Urban)	6 – 10	0 – 1
Surface (Rural)	5 – 9	0 – 3
Surface (Unobserved)	4 – 6	1 – 3
Subspace (Near Biospheric Horizon or Human Outposts	5 – 9	1 – 3
Subspace (Unobserved)	1 – 3	3 – 6
Deep Subspace	0 – 1	6 – 10

Universe without modification.

Biospheric Horizon

The Gateway to Subspace

The Biospheric Horizon marks the edge of Biospheric Space and the beginning of the Subspatial Realms. This threshold is ill-defined and dependent upon a large number of factors including which Realm one is attempting to access. One doesn’t have to dig very far before the heat and radiation from Hades renders Surface life impossible, yet that borehole Breakthrough on the Surface may be in a desert and have no access to the Abyss at all. As a general rule, however, breaking through the Biospheric Horizon to any Subspatial Realm is logical: If you’re near the ocean there may be a Breakthrough to the Abyss. If you’re at a volcano you might find a Shallowing to a Vulcan biosphere or a Breakthrough to the Void.

Sapiologists believe that humans created (or were bred to create) Anthropic Radiation. As Zed is a necessary element of Countless life, so it goes that a certain Radiation level is required for Biospheric life. Where-ever humans settle Rads, well, radiate outward and expand the Biosphere. This feedback loop is great for humanity—constantly growing the Biospheric and usually Superficial Reality. The Countless, however, have a love-hate relationship with it. They now require minute levels of Radiation to maintain their human forms, but over-exposure forces the Countless into Dormancy and eventual death.

Though the Countless refer to the Tidal Event as “the” anthropic Tidal Event, there have been many smaller outbursts of Radiation before and after 1969. The Radiation released by the Tidal Event rendered the vast majority of Subspace

New Knowledge: Ætheric Navigation

Unlike the Dreaming, with its relatively stable and safe Silver Paths and Surface-like geography, navigating Subspace is somewhere between an art and a skill. While each Realm has idiosyncracies that make traveling through it a unique challenge, they have enough similarities that learning the principles of riding the solar winds down the interplanetary highway helps Countless learn to navigate Hades' magma convection currents and that helps Countless learn how Shadow Biomes' borders migrate and change over time. The shared principles of navigating Subspace are known as æther currents.

●○○○○ **Novice:** You can read a map and usually end up where you intended to go.
●●○○○ **Practiced:** You usually avoid running your UFO into known settlements and outposts.
●●●○○ **Competent:** You can avoid obvious dangers that aren't on your map like rogue planets, underwater prominences, uncharted Systems, etc.
●●●●○ **Expert:** You can recover from going wildly off-course with only the most basic sensor readings.
●●●●● **Master:** You can read the subtle signatures of dark matter filaments, the magnetosphere changing polarities, and approaching Games.

unsuitable for pure Holographic life. Soon after, humanity began to penetrate farther and deeper into Subspace than ever before--drilling boreholes into the Earth's crust, launching probes into the Heavens and the Abyss, and even creating (or perhaps discovering) Digital Subspace.

Even with the hindrance of their new human bodies and Subspace being rendered strange and hostile by Radiation's lasting damage, the Countless have eons of experience to draw upon in their mission to reclaim Subspace. Though humanity is penetrating deeper into Subspace than ever before its understanding is limited and the political will to support these efforts is, at best, weak.

Mars
Merkur
Jupiter

The Heavens

"It's a bit of a misnomer, *I Signed*.
The anthropic ergosphere is more of a lumpy potato than a sphere.
"'Yer mum's an anthropic lumpy potato,'" Mr. Spriggan grumbled.
-from Ethyl's Mission Logs

The image other inhumans conjure for Subspace is most often that of the Void. The Realm that most Countless claim as their birthplace, Voidspace is usually accessed by traveling up from the Surface. This feat is so mundane that unmodified humans can manage it. Humanity's early journeys into the Heavens flooded it with deadly Radiation, provoking the Tidal Event and precipitating the Countless' infestation of the Earth.

The Celestials have made the most progress of any Countless in decontaminating this Realm. The Joining left Kites as vulnerable to the Void as humans. The Kites rose to this challenge and developed the engineering and near-Earth industry required to build a new generation of Voidships. Celestials are better suited to microgravity than other terrestrial life and so their Voidships and habitats almost never have artificial gravity.

The most successful efforts so far, including the Lunar Power Corporation, have piggybacked on human exploration efforts. Why bother re-inventing the wheel, when humans already have the technology and equipment to get to space? From there it's a simple second-star-to-the-left and you're in Voidspace. As long as Countless are willing to put up with a little Anthropic Radiation from time to time, infiltrating and subverting NASA, the ESA, etc. is a much simpler prospect than going it alone.

Once teeming with Holographic life, the Void is now a dead, Irradiated, wasteland. Evading notice by human probes and avoiding deadly Radiation pools are the simplest requirements of survival in Voidspace. Oases where Zero Point Energy still flows in from the Deep are few, and most often dominated by Familiar chimera twisted and crazed by the clashing Anthropic and Harmonic Tides.

The Biospheric Horizon

and the Void

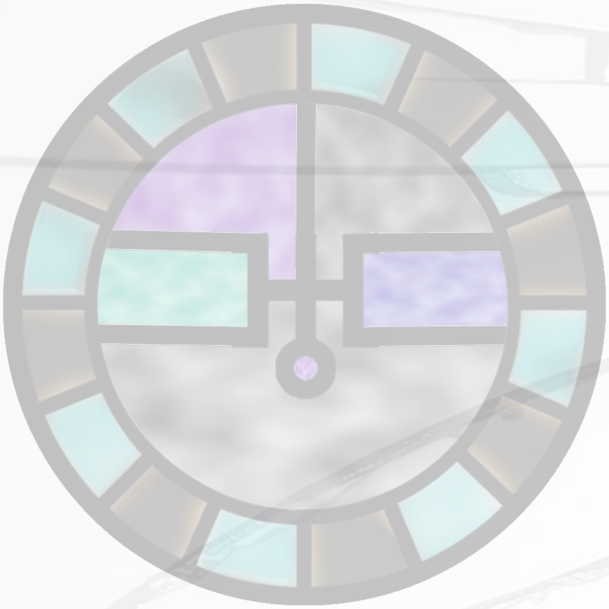
Traveling from Superficial Reality to the Void is intuitive and simple: get higher. The vast majority of Earth's atmosphere is technically a part of the Biospheric Horizon, and humans regularly travel through that with the assistance of old technology. Even mountain climbers sometimes get high enough to reach the very rare Shallowings between Biospheric Space and the Void.

Countless (and human for that matter) Breakthroughs to the Void most often take the form of huge launch pads for rockets. Baikonur Cosmodrome and the Kennedy Space Center are the prototypical examples. Countless superscience has more flexibility than humans', and so their Breakthroughs can be oceanic launch systems, huge space-guns straddling mountaintops, or even a space elevator. The limiting factor on any breach to the Heavens is how much Radiation it will be exposed to. More isolated places can house futuristic and fantastic Breakthroughs without provoking Anthropic Hostility, but one lost human witness can completely destroy a poorly undisguised Breakthrough.

The Heavens in Shadow

Some of the most arresting places in Subspace are those where the Void and Shadow kiss. Chimera born from these Echoes reflect all the strange fantasies that humans have about life in outer space. Heavenly Chimera can take almost any form from humans with forehead ridges to muppetlike creatures, crystalline entities to mattress trees, and even giant tardigrades.

Both the Celestials and the Silicates emerged from the Void. Together they founded and maintained the Pyrean Solar Empire. Pax Pyreas held from Mercury to Jupiter (excluding the Earth's hazard zone) for eons. Earthbound Countless hope that some of the Empire's treasures survived the Tidal Event, waiting to be reclaimed.



Void Hazards

Layer	Radiation	Pressure	Gravity	Atmosphere
Biospheric Horizon	Negligible	Altitude Sickness	1G	Breathable
Earth Orbit	Negligible	Catastrophic Decompression	Micro-gravity	None
Sol Orbit	Dangerous	Catastrophic Decompression	0G	None
Deep Horizon	Dangerous	Catastrophic Decompression	0G	None

The Abyss

Following the light of the future we left our home.
But always our minds return again to our beginnings.
-Abyssal Truism

The mass of humans believe that the planet Earth entire is their domain, yet they've only just begun to enter the Abyss. Accessing the Abyss is as intellectually simple as accessing the Heavens—enter the sea; go down. Just like Voidspace, the practice is devilishly complicated. Surviving the intense pressures, cold, and darkness of the Abyss requires careful planning and preparation. UFOs designed to travel this Realm most often take the form of diving bells, submarines, and bathyspheres loaded with xenotechnological hull-reinforcements and life support devices. As with Voidspace, evading the notice of human probes is key. Unliked Voidspace, this Realm's Radiation takes the form of pollution--nuclear waste from crashed submarines, toxic waste from oceanic mining and shipping accidents, and lost (but still dangerous) munitions from the Surface's myriad conflicts litter the Abyss. Beyond the mundane dangers these hazards present, all are extremely Irradiated which can disrupt SLS Systems.

Hazards in the Abyss run from the mundane to the strange. Prior to the Tidal Event, Abyssals shared this Realm with other inhumans including the Mer, Rokea, and Undines. At the best of times relationships between these groups were only strained. As climate change and pollution continue to decimate the oceans resources and habitats become fewer and more precious, and the Abyss' residents are forced into direct competition. Worse still Irradiated wastelands in the Abyss have begun producing mutated chimerical fauna. Irradiated chimera, including monstrous giant squids, bottle-nosed dolphins, and even river-dragons now hunt the Abyss for sources of Zero Point Energy and are not in the least bit picky about what form their prey takes.

As one of the few stable Breakthroughs to the Abyss, Kuaihelani City is the de-facto hub of culture and commerce for the Realm. That said, the Biospheric seas are littered with abandoned oil platforms and scientific stations that, if decontaminated, provide easy foundations for the Countless to build new Breakthroughs into the Abyss. Oceania City is the first successful attempt at building a Breakthrough from whole-cloth, and required none of the decontamination of those other, more parasitic, efforts.

Seamonsters in Shadow

More than any other Realm the Abyss significantly overlaps the Shadow. The sheer amount of undiscovered sealife rivals that of any other part of Biospheric Space. Environments and ecologies that were either rejected by the Surface world or became extinct long ago take up a huge portion of the

Abyss' Shadow. Everything from seadragons and merfolk to underwater cities near Iceland to black-smoker ecologies deep under the ice of a snowball Earth exists where the Shadow touches the Abyss. Shipping lanes, military and scientific submarines, shipwrecks, and secret Technocratic outposts are the most common anthropic intrusions into these parts of the Abyss.

Abyssal Hazards

Layer	Radiation	Pressure	Atmosphere
Biospheric Horizon	Negligible	Surface	Aenoxic (Aquatic)
Continental Shelf	Dangerous (Cold)	Heavy	Aenoxic (Aquatic)
The Abyss	Dangerous (Cold)	Crushing	Aenoxic (Aquatic)
Deep Horizon	Cryogenic	Crushing	Aenoxic (Aquatic)

Hades

Upon death, she became a god and found a home on Mauna Loa, on the Island of Hawai'i. There she dug her final and eternal fire pit, Halemaumau Crater, at the summit of Kilauea Volcano. Known as the Navel of the World, Ka Piko o ka Honua -- where the gods began creation.

- The Creation of Hawai'i

Hades formed, the Aidoneus say, when the two powerful Silicate collectives called Theia and Gaea came together in an apocalyptic event known as the giant-impact. Thousands of client Silicates died when the two celestial bodies collided, and both Theia and Gaea were changed forever. Gaea, the larger of the two, consumed most of Theia's matter and birthed a new companion body: Luna. When the Titan Phaeton died later he spread his surviving client Silicates throughout the Heavens. Theia and Gaea also died, but their some of their constituent Silicates survived in the new, fiery, Realm their "parents" had created. In the beginning Luna and Terra shared lighter, particulate, matter in a sort of atmosphere—but Luna quickly drifted too far away for her gravity to share matter with Gaea. Individual since the death of their titanic collective, and now separate from even their siblings on Luna, the Hadeans turned to contemplation of themselves and their home. They restyled themselves the Hidden Ones, masters of Hadean Subspace.

Humans have only scratched the surface of subterranean Subspace. Rogue Aidoneus cladologists propose ancient unknown Tidal Events as humans learned to pierce the Earth's skin. These heralded the arrivals of Countless that eventually became Nockers, Dwarves, Tsuchigumo, and countless other distantly related Clades of unknown Surface Countless. Mainstream cladologists and historians, of course, reject this idea. Whatever the truth, the fact remains that Hades, similar to the Abyss, represents a nearly limitless Realm that very few humans even consider, let alone attempt to probe. This provides a double-edged sword to the Aidoneus as they return to Subspace. On one side, because humans have very little understanding of how to access the Hadean Realm the Countless who carve out colonies here are almost guaranteed safety from Anthropic Hostility in the near-term. On the other side, because humans don't understand how to access Hades the Countless have to create entirely new infrastructure, technology, and engineering to protect their partly-human forms from the heat, pressure, and mundane radiations of the Realm.

Very few Hadean outposts exist, and Breakthroughs between them are even rarer. The majority of commerce between Hadean settlements takes the form of massive drillship tankers traveling along relatively well-understood (but still treacherous) magma currents. Smaller, short range, drillships are utilized for colony maintenance and construction, but their relatively small size limits their capacity to carry the massive SLS Systems their Joined forms now require. These short-range vessels are famous for being only barely capable of supporting Biospheric life.

Hadean hazards include the expected twin tides of Radiation from the surface and unstable Dross from the Deep. Radiation

Hadean Hazards

Layer	Radiation	Pressure	Atmosphere
Biospheric Horizon	Dangerous (Inferno)	Crushing	Anaerobic
Moho	Dangerous (Inferno)	Crushing	Anaerobic
Mantle	Dangerous (Inferno)	Crushing	Anaerobic
Deep Horizon	Dangerous (Inferno)	Crushing	Anaerobic

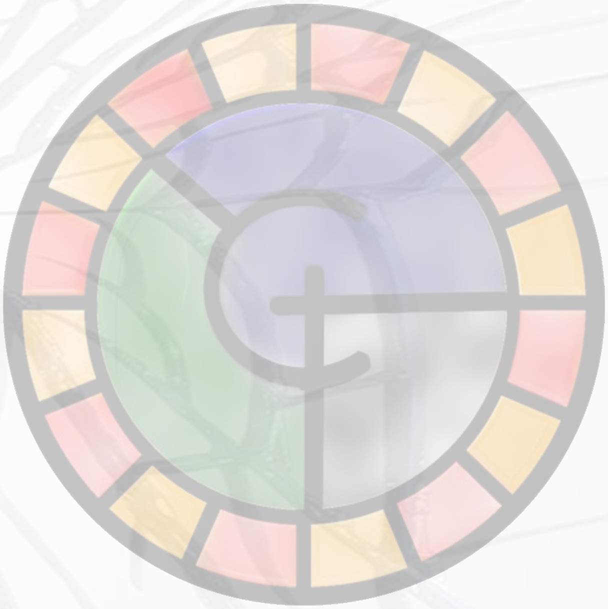
doesn't penetrate this Realm as strongly as it does many others, and its lasting effects are limited. Old Aidoneus surveys of Hadean currents, trade routes, and estates have been rendered useless by the dangerous eddies and cyclones stirred up by the Tidal Event. Deep Tides provide most of the hazards in Hades: unexpected upwellings of heat and radiation from below have rendered several productive Breakthroughs unusable for the foreseeable future.

Life in Hades

The life found in modern Hades are classified into three groups: troglochimera, stygochimera, and Ymiri. The Troglochimera are land-based chimera. These are found in caves and burrowing through the strata of the Earth. Stygochimera live in the fluidic spaces in Hades and can be found in aquifers, cavernous lakes and rivers, and even in the fiery Moho itself. Once well understood and generally docile, Hadean chimera have become strange and feral in the wake of the Tidal Event. Many species were wiped out by terminal Radiation poisoning. Surviving species have mutated to better suit the now barren environment, aggressively hunting and hoarding what little Zed can be found. While the relative scarcity of Holographic life in Hades at first seems to be a blessing, nature abhors a vaccuum and completely new chimera are being born in the magma. These creatures range the gamut from helpful to benign to hostile, and often there's no indication of their temperament until it's too late for visitors to escape.

Previously the Aidoneus had mostly managed to find distantly cordial relationships with the other sentient creatures in Hades—that is to say that they treated Ymiri life the way they treated other Silicates. The Aidoneus came to think of all pre-Invasion civilizations they encountered in Hades as Ymiri. Most subterranean changelings object to being lumped together with Norwegian dwarves, but Aidoneus scholars and diplomats rarely notice. Pre-Tidal Event the Aidoneus' stable and introspective federation of city-states had little interest or motivation incompetition with their Ymiri neighbors. The more warlike Ymiri quickly learned that the Aidoneus responded to raids on any of their member states with overwhelming force, while the more peaceful (or at least isolationist) fire-and-earth changelings had more pressing concerns than the Hidden Ones.

What became of the Ymiri cultures following the Tidal Event is not currently known, but rumors of long-range supply ships going missing on the way to Port Moho have begun to circulate.



The Shadow

"Life, uh, finds a way."

—Michael Chrichton, Jurassic Park

Years of exploration and Hollywood blockbusters have made explaining how to access the Heavens, Abyss, and Hades to new Countless relatively simple. You go up to get to Voidspace, you go down to get to Hades, and you get wet to go to the Abyss. The methods Countless use to access these Realms and create Breakthroughs generally follow the narrative conventions humans created in their research and fiction: space ships, rockets, submarines, boats, drills, mines, and caves and so on provoke no Anthropic Hostility from any abducted humans they might bring along.

The Shadow is different.

Home to the Ancestors, a strange Species of Countless, the Shadow Biosphere creeps through the other layers of the Holographic Universe. Where humans settled, Anthropic Radiation spread, and the Shadow recoiled. Human settlements changed the land and their agriculture changed its life. Rivers were rerouted, hills were mined, some animals were tamed and others hunted. Things that didn't adapt were forced into the Shadow Biosphere. The very last of each thing to pass away from the Waking World became an Ancestor.

As species and even the land itself were shaped to humanity's liking, the Shadow grew. In extreme cases, humans turned against themselves and their own creations, resulting in massive tracts of the Shadow that are reflections of previously healthy neighborhoods that had been mismanaged and mangled. Though these play home to precious few Ancestors, there are some.

Despite their best efforts to "civilize" the wilds, precious untouched places on Earth (the Amazon, or certain parts of the Canadian taiga for example) continue to bridge the Shadow and the Waking. These natural Breakthroughs, called Shallowings, represent the most reliable paths into and out of the Shadow Biosphere. Other Shallowings bind the Shadow with other Realms—kelp jungles link the Abyss and the Shadow while the ecosystems of black smokers and other geothermal vents link the Shadow, Hades, and the Abyss. These Subspatial nexus may have their own Breakthroughs to the Surface, creating secondary paths into reality for the Ancestors and their Countless "neighbors".

The Tidal Event pushed the Shadow further out of Biospheric Space. Huge swaths of the Shadow were Unmade entirely. Much of the Shadow now coincides with the Shadowlands and is subject to the Maelstroms. Stygian fleets often follow in the Maelstroms' wake, bringing hungry Wraiths hoping to exploit the Shadow for resources.

The Great Dying

Unnatural Selection

The final nights are a desperate time for the Ancestors. Surface biodiversity is being destroyed by humans and the Shadow should be growing—but it's shrinking. Most of the new biomes are bypassing the Shadow and being consumed by the Dark Kingdoms' hungry industries. Paired with Maelstroms and raiders assaulting all corners of the Shadow, the Shadow Biosphere is shrinking in on itself. Even biomes relatively untouched by ghostly incursions are haunted by the Spectres of the Great Maw itself. Newfie Wolf's Echo is infested by a Gale of Spectres who kill and mutilate any living thing they come across.

One would be forgiven for thinking the other Countless could prove useful allies for the Ancestors. The Countless' desperate race to return to and decontaminate the other Subspatial Realms has spawned massive networks of Surface and Subspatial industry starved for raw material and talent. The between a Stygian Forge and Port Moho's vast manufacturing sector is immaterial to the Ancestors and so they fight against the Great Dying alone.

Ancestors, Shadow Chimera, and Echoes

Bubbling through every layer of Subspace are discrete realms of possibility. Countless explorers and project managers generally refer to these realms as Echoes. Echoes vary as wildly as any other element of the Holographic Universe, but few are larger than an island, forest, asteroid, or town. At least as far as their own physics goes Echoes are internally consistent—an Echo reflecting Belle Isle turned peacock habitat would have local rules that very closely mirror the Surface, while the asteroid settlement 'Ttisukdakain's reality more closely hews to the Heaven's physics, Pele's Palace

Accounts Conflict:

If an Echo Forms Without a Breakthrough Does Anyone Notice?

The origins of Echoes are not well understood. Some are clearly remnants of pre-Tidal Event Countless civilization, while others seem to be products of the Tidal Event itself, and still others were created (either accidentally or purposefully) by Countless activity. Countless explorers find themselves unable to deny that many Echoes reflect powerful currents in the human zeitgeist. Agharta, the lost Civilization of Mu, and Aetherspace all exist and are populated by the other Night Folk. Mu, in particular, was discovered to be populated by unsavory creatures that reflect America’s inability to reckon with its genocidal past and was flagged as a Subspatial hazard zone. Without any stable Breakthrough leading to it Mu has continued to grow, gobbling up a larger and larger portion of what remains of the Shadow.

exists as an amalgam of Hades and the Surface.

The Shadow is a patchwork of biomes from different parts and eras of this world (and possibly others). Each Echo biome is populated with chimerical reflections of the creatures it had when it was forced out of Biospheric Space. This creates a paradox: Each Ancestor claims that they are the last member of their species, yet the Shadow Biosphere is home to entire herds of woolly mammoths, extended families of extinct near-humans, and fungal forests from the earliest age of terrestrial life.

Ancestors (and Inanimae for that matter) see no paradox and go to no trouble clearing up others’ confusion. Each Echo is, much as the Ancestors themselves are, a memorial to the genuine thing. Nothing is ever truly destroyed and when anything passes from Superficial Reality it has to go somewhere. The Ancestors themselves are divided between those who believe that Echo biomes are created at the moment of an Ancestor’s birth (much as any other Countless Emerges from Dormancy with its Holographic acoutremon), those who believe Echoes are the last will and testament of the creatures that couldn’t (for whatever reason) create an Ancestor, and those who believe that the biomes are reflections of the Ancestors’ hope and loneliness.

Shadow Hazards

Biome	Common Shallowings	Rare Shallowings	Unmaking Conditions
Alpine	Voidspace	Empires of Skies and Stones	Cat 1 Maelstrom
Aquatic	The Abyss, Hades	Empires of Stones and Tears	Cat 2 Maelstrom
Surface	The Near Dreaming	Empire of Seeds and Tears	Cat 2 Maelstrom
Urban	The Near Dreaming, The Dollhouse, The Shadowlands	Empire of Flickers	Cat 3 Maelstrom
Vulcan	Hades, Voidspace	Empires of Flames and Stones	Cat 2 Maelstrom

Digital Subspace

"We are no longer particularly in the business of writing software to perform specific tasks. We now teach the software how to learn, and in the primary bonding process it molds itself around the task to be performed. The feedback loop never really ends, so a tenth year polysentience can be a priceless jewel or a psychotic wreck, but it is the primary bonding process—the childhood, if you will—that has the most far-reaching repercussions."

-- Bad'l Ron, Wakener

Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri

Digital Subspace exists as a thin film floating over, around, and through Surface Reality. With the right equipment, even humans can access the Digital Realm. The ubiquity of Internet access gives Digital Natives a significant leg up on the other Clades in repopulating Subspace. Despite being populated almost exclusively by Digital Natives, the SV3F System is the most successful Countless settlement in any Subspatial Realm. Ships from all over the Net wait for months just to dock at SV3F's many ports, and Silicates use the System as a hub for Digital and meat-world travel.

Digital Subspace is not without its drawbacks and hazards. Its Undefined Fantastic Objects, known as “Systems”, are few and far between, and though SV3F is the first permanent Countless settlement in Subspace since the Tidal Event, it is also the only public one in Digital Subspace. The System's populace have a libertarian bent and their political decision-making reflects this. Without a strong figurehead or central authority it is extremely difficult to mount collaborative projects (such as establishing outposts, coordinated exploration, and disaster relief). The System isn't exactly self-destructing, but it isn't well managed either.

SV3F's archipelago is completely surrounded by the stuff of Digital Subspace--the Energy Sea. Ships navigate it, but no Countless can expect to swim the vast distances between Systems. The Sea itself is plagued by White-outs, pirates, and Truth-fueled “Games”--sector-spanning storms where Digital reality warps to conform to unknown physics from which the only escape is to fulfill the Game's win condition. Digital reality is filled with chimera known as sprites, Botnet 1's

Mockingbird slaves, and the nearly godlike Sparks--Inanimae whose anchors are the infrastructure that supports the Net itself.

Countless (and others) attempting to access Digital Subspace need to have a mechanism to cope with the Realm's most alien attribute: Time in Digital reality passes at an incredible clip. Without either a Formula or Device capable of altering the subject's experience of time, Countless entering the Net from the Surface react far too slowly to meaningfully interact with the Realm. Bored Netizens make a hobby of finding these frozen Incompatibles and creating monuments from them. Some mercifully Surface them, though these Digital Natives are killjoys.

Digital Ecology

Things get strange where the Shadow overlaps Digital Subspace. Digital Chimera take many forms: from animal-like Bignomes, to humanoid Sprites, to abstractions like Viruses and the godlike Sparks. Digital Subspace is dominated by the unliving Energy Sea. Here the only life Countless explorers are likely to encounter are hostile orphaned Game-Sprites. Digital ecology opens up on the uncharted Systems that punctuate the Sea. Most Systems are pristine wildernesses, populated primarily by untamed Bignomes. A few Systems host Sprite civilizations in various levels of development. Very rarely will explorers come upon Systems peopled by other changelings—these have the widest possible range of inhabitants. Some changeling-inhabited Systems are entirely devoid of Digital life, others function more like Freeholds: Digital life filling the familiar roles of chimera in the Freehold. Any Countless who encounters a Spark or a Virus and survives is exceptional.

Digital Hazards

Layer	Time Dilation	Mockingbird Infection	Unmaking
Energy Sea	**Severe**	**No**	**Games**
Most Systems	**Brutal**	**Yes**	**Games, Whiteouts**
Deep Horizon	**Brutal**	**Yes**	**Whiteouts**

The Last Horizon and The Black

> *"Once upon a time, there was matter. And energy. And Love. And Love meant that all the matter and all the energy were all bound very tightly together in one place. And then something new came along. Something that wasn't Love.*
>
> *"Boredom. Some parts of the matter and energy wanted something new. Something different. They became... distinct. Adversarial.In reaction, other individuals arose. Those who wanted Love to continue. Two factions. Who fought a war in Heaven."*
>
> *--Trance Gemini*
> *"Coda: A Play in One Act"*
> *Robert Hewitt Wolfe*

Bounded by the Anthropic Horizon and the Biospheric Horizon, the Realms of the Countless sometimes seem like they're all there could be of Subspace. Beyond the Anthropic Horizon, however, Radiation is so weak that Harmonic Truth boils Subspace and things get… weird. As one (hopefully with a UFO with powerful life-support apparatus) travels further from the Surface into Subspace, Radiation levels drop until you reach the Anthropic Horizon. There, the Realms give up the pretense that they are distinct things. Each Realm bleeds into the others as you approach the Anthropic Horizon, creating treacherous conditions where the your UFO may not be appropriately equipped for the hazards it encounters.

At the edge of the Black the True Prophets of Harmony exist, suspended in the Last Horizon. Along their long journeys from the Surface the Prophets were exposed to so much Harmonic Truth that even the benign effects of their Radiation poisoning were overcome. Botnet 1, the Jungle, Persephone, and presumably other foolish former-Countless wait there. Caught at the doorstep to Paradise but unable to step over the threshold, the Mad Ones project incredibly destructive Deep Tides into Subspace. Where these waves pass, anything contaminated with Anthropic Radiation suffers its noxious effects.

Infinity Crisis

Discarded Timelines

Subspace is vast and holds nothing sacred, not even the flow of time. The deeper one travels into it and the closer one comes to the Anthropic Horizon, the more one must expect the unexpected. Aside from being the prison that holds the True Prophets of Harmony, the Last Horizon contains myriad Echoes of discarded timelines and universes. The genesis of many (but not all) of these Echoes are reckless Unleashings of the Chronos Art. Countless who in desperation travel back in time to try to change the flow of history might accidentally trap themselves in one of these rejected timelines. To these victims of hubris their Unleashing appears to have succeeded, but in truth they've ejected themselves from reality. The Prime Holographic Universe grinds on toward maximum entropy without them; their private universes visible only as the light from distant stars.

The improbability of the Last Horizon provides room for other mirror universe Echoes, where the Holographic Universe's history took a different path. One reflects a history where the Tidal Event coincided with the Shattering and the Countless had centuries instead of decades to adjust to life on the Surface. In another the Tidal Event happened but the Shattering didn't. In another humanity never existed at all. These and coutless other discarded timelines are iterated many times on the surface of the Anthropic Horizon. Careless or adventurous Countless can access these Echoes. Perhaps your Story starts in one. In the end, the only reason to confine one's story to a particular set of assumptions and rules is to maintain a coherent narrative. Sometimes challenging coherence can produce exactly the kind of ridiculous, tragic, horror that *Changeling: the Dreaming* is best at.

Twin Voyagers

Is it possible for the Countless to escape Subspace and return to the Black? The Prophets of Harmony certainly believe so. The Collective maintains no official position, but strongly encourages researchers to focus on more Earthly concerns. Countless who attempt to punch through the heliopause and return home to the Black inevitably find themselves waylayed in one of the shattered realms embedded in the Last Horizon.

For their part, humanity's efforts to reach the Black have been more successful. The two Voyager probes passed from Sol into the interstellar medium with barely a hiccup. Despite the incredible distances and the limitations of 1970s human technology, these explorers continue to transmit data back to Earth. None of the public-facing data indicates that the Last Horizon even exists. Curiously, no one has met an Oppy who claims to be born from either of the Voyagers after they breached the Last Horizon.

Environmental Conditions

> *"This will be the first of a thousand worlds that we will give life to. For we are gods, and we are lonely, so we shall create."*
>
> *— Adrian Tchaikovsky, Children of Time*

Not unique to Subspace but integral to understanding how becoming partially human divorces the Countless from their homelands, Environmental Conditions are included in as an optional ruleset for this text. Different Realms in Subspace have different hazards that must be overcome or avoided for the Countless and their human technicians to survive. The Countless' Undefined Fantastic Objects almost always have a Subspace Life Support System dedicated to making Biospheric life possible in Subspace, but what kind of life they enable depends upon the owner. The Countless have unique Origin Mutations which reflect their otherworldly heritage and allow them to downgrade certain Environmental Conditions' severity and survive otherwise fatal environments. These Mutations allow Countless shipwrights to cut certain corners when building a UFO for a Celestial that must not be cut when building the exact same UFO for an Aidoneus.

Environmental Conditions are divided into six different broad categories: Atmospheric, Pressure, Gravity, Radiation, Time, and Unmaking Conditions.

Atmospheric Conditions

Human life depends upon certain chemicals being available in the environment. Xenotechnological and even mundane life support equipment can help Implanted Countless and humans cope with difficult atmospheric conditions. Silicates are famous for Refinements that allow them to survive atmospheres that other Countless would avoid.

Breathable

Surface-normal atmospheric conditions capable of supporting Biospheric life. Usually imposes no penalty.

Anaerobic/Toxic

The atmosphere is not suitable for human respiration, but may support other Biospheric life. Typical of underwater environments, outer space, some prehistoric or future Shadow biomes, certain parts of human factories, and the surface of the Moon.
System: Hold breath for Stamina + Athletics rounds, then 1 point bashing damage/round

Caustic

This atmosphere hates Humans and everything they stand for. Very few Biospheric lifeforms can withstand this atmosphere. Typical of Venus, industrial accidents, Vulcan Shadow biomes, and certain exoplanet Echoes.
System: 1 lethal damage/tick

Pressure Conditions

Pressure is an often overlooked feature of life-supporting environments. Mountain climbers, pilots, and divers know better than to ignore unusual pressure conditions. Rapid pressure changes can be extremely detrimental to Surface life. These Conditions are most often mitigated through the use of life support equipment or slow acclimation.

Surface Pressure

Approximately one atmosphere of pressure. Capable of supporting most Biospheric life.

Altitude Sickness

Altitude sickness is a cluster of nonlethal symptoms caused by rapid decompression including: headache, nausea, and shortness of breath. This condition can be avoided by allowing time for acclimation. Generally resolves in a few days without medical attention.
System: +3 difficulty on all checks until resolved (usually next day).

Decompression Sickness

Decompression Sickness is also caused by rapid decompression and is more severe than Altitude Sickness. Potentially fatal without treatment.
System: 1 bashing damage/tick

Catastrophic Decompression

Uncontrolled decompression occurs when pressure is so low that the lungs cannot vent quickly enough to avoid injury. Common to Void environments.
System: 6 lethal damage/tick

Heavy

Heavy pressure environments exist on Earth (typically in the oceans) and are very dangerous to Surface life. Typically found on Superearths and other heavy Echoes, in the Abyss, and in Hades.
System: 1 bashing damage/tick

Crushing

As lethal as explosive decompression, extremely high pressure are a significant hazard in many Realms. Common to Hades, landslides, the Abyss, and certain planetary Void environments.
System: 6 lethal damage/tick

Gravity Conditions

Celestials and Aidoneus experience gravity very differently from humans (and each other). Those accustomed to Surface-normal gravity are comically clumsy in lower gravity and hopelessly disabled in heavier gravity. Gravity Conditions are typically mitigated via a combination of SLS Systems, personal life support equipment, and directed Mutation.

1G

Surface-normal gravity. Typical of Earth and Venus. Humans love this shit. Normally has no associated penalty. Celestials are a notable exception.

Low Gravity

This condition covers everything from large asteroids to the surface of Mars. Some Biospheric life thrives in this condition. Humans don't, suffering from clumsiness at first, followed by muscle and bone density loss, and deterioration of mental acquity as exposure stretches into months and years.
System: Maximum jump height & length *7; +3 difficulty to all Dex checks
Note: The default Low Gravity Condition reflects the effect of the gravity at Luna's surface. Storytellers may wish to fine-tune the effect of Low-G to specific environments.

Micro & Zero Gravity

Negligible gravity. Typical of aircraft in nose-dive, orbiting space stations, and long-distance spacecraft without gravity generators. Some Biospheric life thrives in these conditions, particularly fungus and bacteria. Humans suffer similar effects to Low-G Condition.
System: Maximum jump height and length removed; +6 difficulty to all Dex checks

Heavy Gravity

Unusually heavy gravity. Typical of spinning amusement park rides, excessive martial arts training chambers, Jupiter's

lower atmosphere, and superearth Echoes. Some Biospheric life thrives in this condition. Humans suffer limitations to strength, endurance, and dexterity.
System: Maximum jump height and length /7; +3 difficulty to all Physical checks
Note: As with Low-G, the default Heavy Gravity values are a simplification of a very wide range of possible gravities. Storytellers may wish to fine-tune Heavy-G values to specific locations.

Dangerous Gravity

Bonecrushingly heavy gravity. Typical of fighter jets executing dangerous maneuvers, the surface of the Sun, the surface of Jupiter's core, certain exoplanet Echoes. Here there be splattered humans.
System: Movement impossible; 1 bashing damage/tick

Radiation Conditions

Radiation Conditions reflect the impact that environmental factors like temperature and other mundane radiations have on characters. Personal and UFO life support equipment can help mitigate some of the impact of these conditions.

Negligible

Temperature is suitable for human life. Mundane radiations are either not harmful or only elevated enough to cause trouble over the course of a lifetime. This is the typical condition on the Surface and supports most Biospheric life.

Dangerously Cold/Hot

Though not lethal, this radiation condition makes it difficult for humans to function without proper equipment. Some Biospheric life thrives under these conditions. Typical of very hot (deserts at midday) or very cold (tundra at midnight) environments.
System: 1 bashing damage/tick

Cryogenic

Thermal radiation is too low to safely accommodate human life. Water behaves like stone. Typical of space, the surface of Pluto, and certain exoplanets. No known Biospheric life thrives under this condition, though some can endure it.
System: 6 lethal damage/tick

Inferno

Thermal radiation is too high to safely accommodate human life. Water is immediately lost to the atmosphere. Typical of poorly constructed space stations, Hadean Subspace, certain parts of the Shadow Biosphere, and the surface of Venus.
System: 6 lethal damage/tick

Radiation Poisoning

Mundane radiations intense enough to cause radiation poisoning. Humans don't do great with this. Certain Biospheric life can endure high radiation conditions. Typical of nuclear waste dumps, Hadean Subspace, Voidspace beyond the Van Allen belts, and poorly constructed UFOs.
System: 1 aggravated damage/tick

Time Dilations

The twin dangers of Heavenly and Digital travel are hostile Chimera and unexpected Time Dilations. Though rare in Voidspace, Time Dilations are known to exist near super-massive objects such as black holes. They can also be artificially (and usually accidentally) created by acceleration. Time Dilation Conditions are ubiquitous in Digital Subspace, and Countless who spend most of their time in Digital Subspace invest heavily in Devices, directed Mutations, and Formulae for mitigating the danger presented by the environment.

1T
Time passes as normal on the Surface with, at most, fractional deviations.

Mild
Mild time dilations (also known as framedrops, lag, stutters, staggers, etc) are those that create at most a 2-to-1 dilation. Third level Temporal Theory/ Time Realm allows subjects of mild time dilations to automatically adjust to this Condition.
System: Time passes twice as fast as expected, leaving the unprepared with half as many actions as they would otherwise have per tick.

Severe
Severe time dilations (commonly called freezes) are those that create at most a 30-to-1 dilation. Fifth level Temporal Theory/Time Realm allows subjects of severe time dilations to automatically adjust to this Condition.
System: Time passes three to thirty times as fast as expected, leaving unprepared subjects unable to react to the environment in a meaningful way. Subjects are unable to react when in the presence of anything accustomed to this Condition or other hazardous conditions/ Conditions. Without proper preparation (such as hanging a conditional Chronos or Wayfare Formula, or having an appropriate SLS System), subjects of this condition need outside aid.

Brutal
Brutal time dilations are common in Digital Subspace (Systems, the Deep Horizon) and Voidspace (near extremely massive objects, approaching the speed of light, etc). There is no level of Temporal Theory/Time Realm that allows subjects to passively adjust to brutal dilations.
System: Time passes thirty-one to one hundred and twenty times as fast as expected. Good luck.

No Time
Extremely rare outside of the Black, certain regions of the Anthropic Horizon are prone to an Unmaking of the Temporal Field itself. Known to Temporal Theorists as Dynamic Time, No Time, and Null time, events within the Dynamic Time Field are confused and incomprehensible to Biospheric life (such as Joined Countless).
System: Null Time Fields are mercifully avoidable with a simple Scanner check (difficulty 6).

More a narrative choice than a proper mechanical system, No Time is a black box to characters while they are trapped in it. Within the Dynamic Time Field every possible series of events occurs. When the Temporal Field returns to normal, the Mists rush in and force mortal (and partly mortal) minds to reconcile these alternate (and often contradictory) timelines. The nature of Dynamic Time leaves even the most basic facts of the experience (such as how long the No Time Condition lasted, who and what were within it, and where it occurred) in question. One character might have witnessed another survivor's death, which is contradicted by the other survivor also exiting the No Time Event alive. One survivor might be from a timeline where the crew's UFO was critically damaged and returned to normal time in a lifeboat, while the rest of the crew's are from a timeline where their UFO underwent fantastic upgrades. Simply put—everything that could possibly happen during Dynamic Time does happen, and the narratives survivors of No Time Conditions come up with are 100% true, even the parts that contradict other survivors' narratives. Humans and changelings who experience No Time often disassociate from other survivors of the same event because they cannot handle the cognitive dissonance of having contradictory lived experiences. Amnesia and self-delusion are often the only ways to accept the events of a No Time experience.

The Countless themselves do not understand No Time, and the only rules (these exist to prevent Storyteller abuse) are that any changes to a player character's character sheet qualities (such as Abilities, Arts, Backgrounds, Appearance, Motions, Mutations) must originate from the player. The Storyteller can veto any suggested change that occurred in No Time, but the Storyteller cannot suggest or make unilateral changes to player characters. The easiest way to handle No Time is to allow players to "retcon" their characters to alternate history versions of themselves, provide no information on what happened during No Time, and let the players play the characters trying to sort things out.

Unmaking Conditions

Though technically an Unmaking, the Tidal Event was unique in that it not only unmade huge regions in Subspace but also poisoned what remained with Radiation. While lesser Unmakings (Games, Whiteouts, and Maelstroms) are all hazards capable of zeroing bits of a Subspatial Realm, they are not the existential threat that the Tidal Event is.

Games

At their core, Games are transient memes that invade the Surface world and influence people to act in strange (often very destructive) ways. The Satanic Panic of the 1970s and 80s was probably inspired by an outbreak of Games. Modern Games typically involve people acting out Creepypastas or conspiracy theories. The humans involved in a Game (usually called "Players" by the Countless) are Low-Emitters who've become tainted with Harmonic Truth. They don't realize that the reality they're seeing is an amalgam of the Surface World, Holographic Reality, and Digital Subspace. Instead, they believe that they've accessed a deeper understanding of the world than "the sheep".

Within Digital Subspace, Games appear to be massive storms blowing across the Energy Sea. The Shallowings at the core of Games are capable of warping the normal rules of reality within their boundaries. As Games pass through space they absorb all sentient beings (Chimera, Countless, Abducted Humans, etc) they encounters into its bubble reality, leaving behind derelict UFOs and even Systems. The reality within a Game reflects the Players' delusions. Time within a Game passes at a unified rate for everyone within it, but outside time might run fast, slow, or even backward.

Exiting a Game requires the Countless within to defeat the Players. The form the Players' lose condition takes depends upon the specific Game, but the most direct route is often killing them. Games protect their Players by converting ephemeral beings (like Chimera) and unmodified humans into Game Sprites. Game Sprites exist to propagate the Game, usually playing the role of victims, followers, or guardians for the Players. If the Countless within the Game are defeated by the Players the Game claims them forever as Game Sprites.

Games have no effect on the landscapes they pass over, rather like neutron bombs.

Maelstroms

The Shadow Biosphere is regularly battered by Maelstroms from the Shadowlands. The form a Maelstrom takes is always appropriate to the particular biome it manifests in: Surface Maelstroms run the gamut from cyclones to electrostatic dust storms to blizzards to meteor showers. These Conditions are separated from normal weather by their attendant Unmaking. Similar to Whiteouts and even the Anthropic Tidal Event itself, Maelstroms erase huge swaths of the territory they travel through. Unlike the Tidal Event, Maelstroms do not leave behind pools of Radiation. Instead, trains of the Hungry Dead wash over Maelstrom ravaged Shadow like ants on carrion. Some come to pillage the Shadow to feed their resource hungry Kingdoms in the Shadowlands. Others are more like the Maelstrom itself; mad, howling, avatars of need.

Maelstroms seem to be more frequent in the presence of Countless who have been poisoned Harmonic Truth.

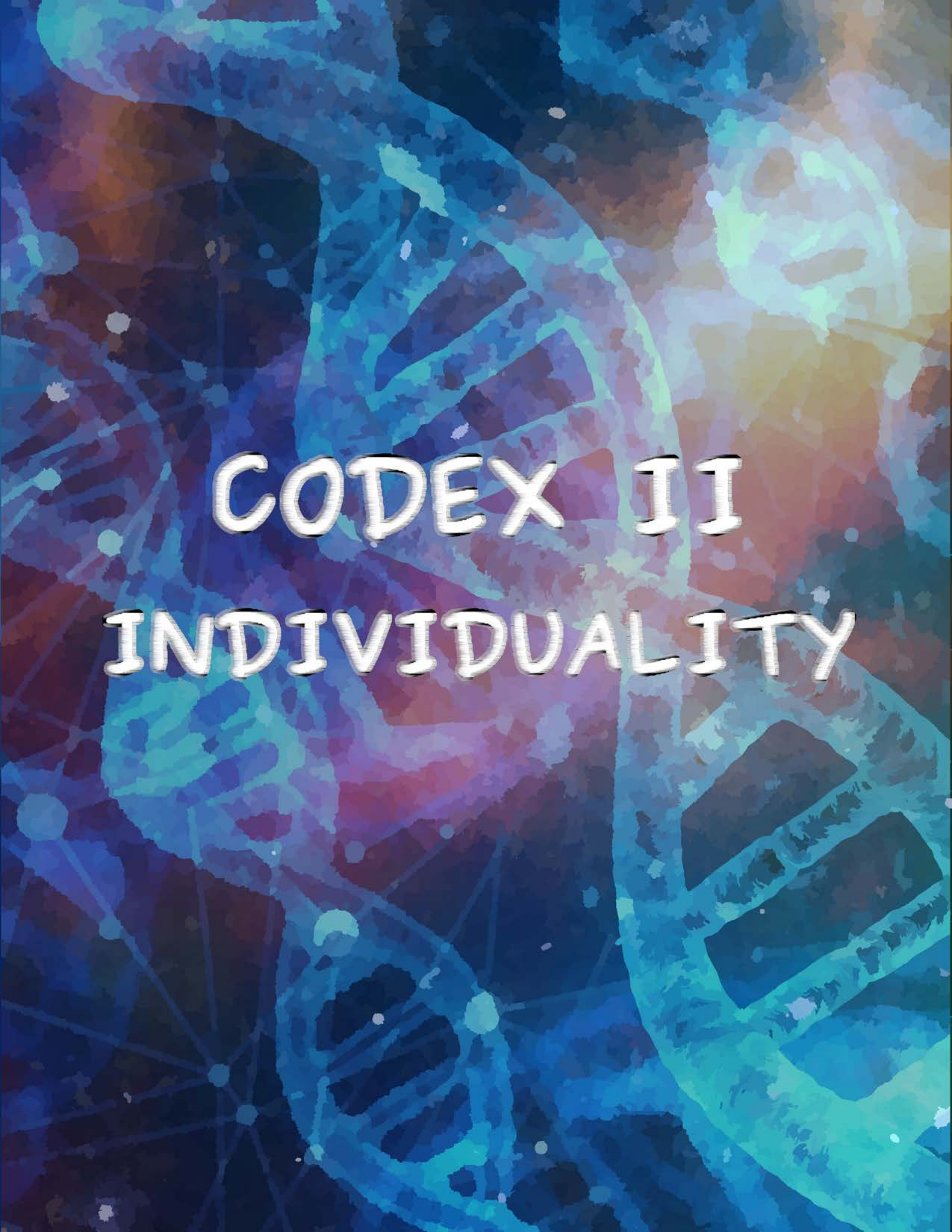
Category 1
Maelstroms are destruction, pure and simple. As they enter a biome in the Shadow, the local rules of Subspace bend them to an appropriate form. This results in Maelstroms often being coupled with other Conditions (such as cold, dark, radiation poisoning, etc). The weakest Maelstroms only affect a single Echo or Biome, and are not haunted by Wraiths.
Trigger: Countless who activate any number of Truth dice while in the Shadow or an adjacent Realm may summon a Cat 1 Maelstrom.

Category 2
Some Maelstroms have enough destructive energy to encounter an Echo or biome and continue deeper into the Shadow. Category 2 Maelstroms cut a path of destruction through multiple biomes in the Shadow, and are followed by Guild raiders.
Trigger: Countless who activate 3 or more Truth dice while in the Shadow may summon a Cat 2 Maelstrom.

Category 3
Vomited from the Maw of Oblivion itself, these monstrosities are the stuff of nightmare. Capable of completely Unmaking the first several biomes they encounter and haunted by ferocious Spectres, a single Cat-3 is almost as much of a threat to the Countless as another Tidal Event.
Trigger: Countless who activate 5 or more Truth dice while in the Shadow may summon a Cat 3 Maelstrom.

Whiteout
Digital Subspace is a unique Realm, supported by the mundane Internet's infrastructure. The Energy Sea and even relatively stable Systems can suffer outages, known as Whiteouts, when the physical hardware that supports their existence goes down. Whiteouts are unique among the Unmaking Conditions in that they are mostly reversible. As backups come online and data or connectivity is restored the geography of Subspace that was Unmade by the Whiteout returns. Any chimera, Countless, Abducted, or Changelings who were in an area that Whited, unfortunately, are lost forever. Countless connected to a Whited area by an MM/I immediately enter Dormancy as if they had suffered fatal Holographic damage, but are otherwise unaffected.
Whiteouts typically appear as massive walls of mist rolling through the Energy Sea. Changelings familiar with Tull Swells will find their appearance unsettlingly familiar.
Triggers: Any Countless who activates 5 or more Truth dice damages the fabric of Digital Subspace and summons a Whiteout. Additionally, Whiteouts can be caused by connectivity outages, power

outages, denial of service attacks, and other disruptions to the Internet itself in the Waking World.



CODEX II

INDIVIDUALITY

Alien Anatomy

Character Creation

> *"'Our Kith is our destiny' is a common sentiment among our distant cousins. This alone leads me to wonder just who it was that decided we were related. No Countless would claim such unscientific nonsense.*
>
> *—excerpt from Ethyl's Mission Logs*

The Countless have a variety of traits that make them distinct from other children of Dream.

This Codex describes four distinct Clades of Countless who were forced to the Surface by the Tidal Event. The inscrutable Kites struggle to accept their new lives constrained by solids. The stoic Silicates bury themselves deep in the Earth and in human information networks. With us since the beginning, strange Forgotten are humanity's lost companions and competitors. The ingenious Oppies are born from Humans crying out into the Black. The Countless are fascinated by classifying the new variations they produce on the Surface. Every Wave that breaks the Surface could be the one that introduces a new, forgotten, Clade that tips the balance in the cold war between the Collective and the Prophets. Less restrictive than Kiths, Clades are a rough grouping based on shared characteristics and origins. Within an individual Clade, natural variation between Countless has produced several Species, as well a variety of Mutations. While cladeologists take their work seriously, most lay-Countless acknowledge that the field is, at best, incomplete and, at worst, flawed.

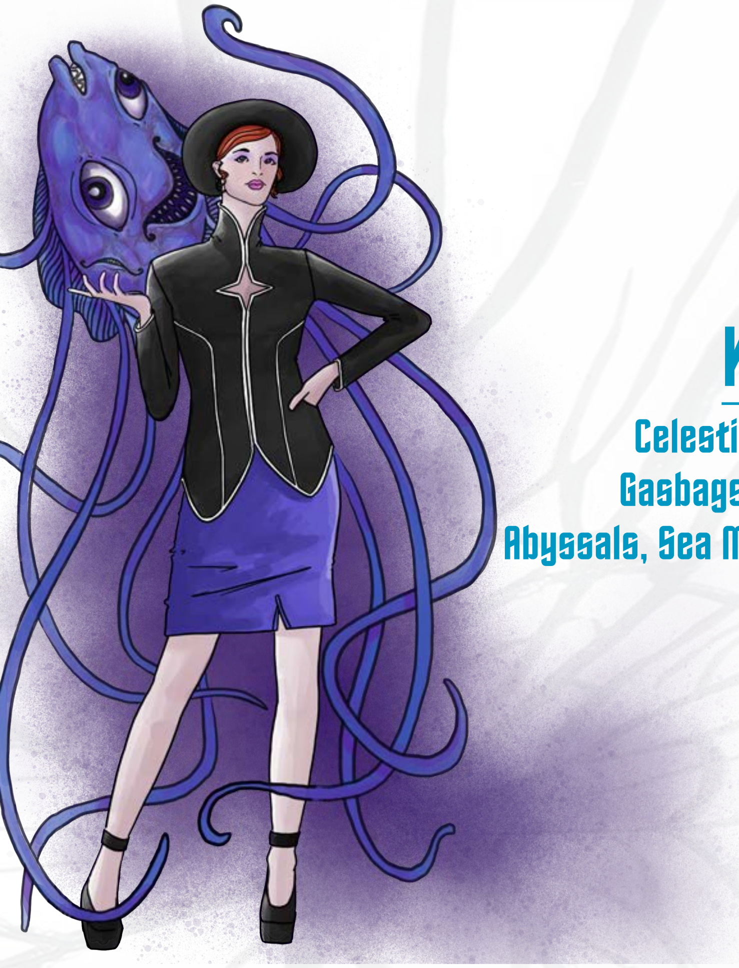
Xenoscience Specialty: Cladeology

Xenoscience can be rolled to make generalizations about Holographic life-forms, including chimera, Countless, and indigenous Changelings. This skill doesn't provide information about culture (that would fall under etiquette) or how to tame a chimera (which would be animal handling or another social skill), but does provide information about a creature's inborn abilities and needs.

Presented below are the three core Clades of the Countless and a new Clade that threatens to disrupt the stalemate between the Collectivists and the Prophets. Each originates from a distinct stage of Sol's development. The three core Clades are divided into two Species each, providing expanded variety in origin, outlook, and powers. Each Clade has its own evolutionary inheritance from Subspace, marked by its Adaptation. Within a Clade, each Species has a further Adaptation that reflects the species-wide specialization that makes them distinct from one another. Individuals within a Species can manifest very different Mutations and Tells, further confusing the business of identifying families within the Countless.

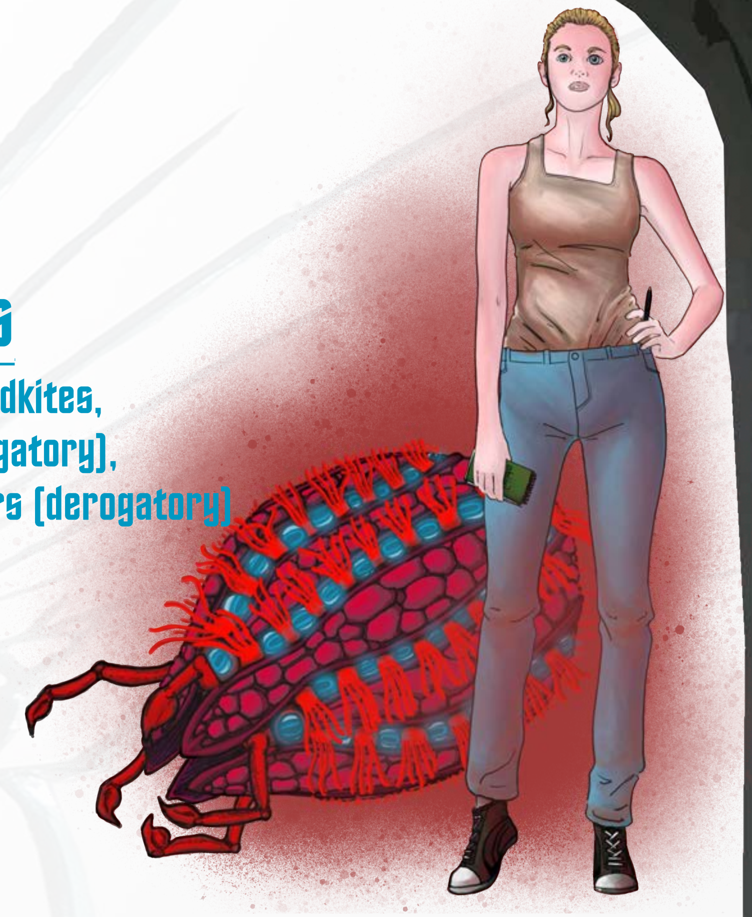
More than their Adaptations and Mutations, however, the Clades' Challenges set them apart from Humanity. While humans likely look on Joined Challenges as disabilities, many

Countless view their Challenges with pride. Like their Adaptations, their Challenges set them apart from Humanity and other Changelings and serve as momentoes of their lost homes.



Kites

Celestials, Voidkites,
Gasbags (derogatory),
Abyssals, Sea Monsters (derogatory)



Long Ago...

... The proto-Kites were born into the planetless early solar system. The sun burned bright and hot, spewing gases and nuclear fire into space. The oldest Kites tell stories about their coming to Sol--meeting the weak Anthropic Field of the time, and being changed forever. Now dependent upon minute quantities of Radiation the ancient Kites could not return to the Black. In the Holographic Universe they created new forms for themselves and their culture--they used their mastery of Field Theory to gather gas and heat and light and became like the tiny suns themselves. These first Kites danced their way through the protoplanetary disc, extending a tentacle here to sample some rare isotope, flashing a bioluminescent message to an ally, inflating a gas bladder to convey a warning to an enemy. Though it was sometimes marred by the skirmishes that mark all civilizations' growing pains, it was the Kites' Eden.

The Birth of Worlds...

... Marked the apex of Kite civilization. As the planets coalesced they scooped up the lighter gases, and the solar wind blew the remainder out into the Black. Over the course of millions of years the rich, fluid-like, space of the protoplanetary disc that gave birth to the Kites became a desert of void and hostile rocky planets. Adapted for the weak gravity of the solar system's earliest days, ancient Kites couldn't tolerate the heavy gravity environments of the planets. They were forced to congregate around the gas giants and as Jupiter migrated from the inner solar system to its modern position, most of the inner Kites went with it. They spread their new Celestial Civilization from Jupiter to the other gas giants and contact with the barren inner solar system became intermittant. Eventually the last relay went dark for the last time.

The Celestial common wisdom that the ancient Kites of the inner solar system had been extinguished was mostly correct. As the Holographic Universe neared its current configuration Voidspace inside the stellar frostline was inhospitable to the Kites who remained. Starved of essential gasses, many inner Kites dissipated.

Those who remained, unable to make the pilgrimage with what remained of their legacy, came up with a desperate plan. Together with the Titans Theia and Rhea the inner Kites engineered the creation of a new Realm. Not a gaseous Realm, as the Heavens had taught them that Sol's outbursts disrupted those, but a fluidic one. Similar enough to be familiar, but without the known weaknesses of the Void. The Kites fashioned their new home, the Abyss, from the now joined bones of the two Silicate amalgams.

The climactic conclusion of their plot saw the inner Kites working incredible unleashings to draw swarms of icy comets to Venus, Earth, and Mars. Riding these apocalyptic swarms to the Surface, many inner Kites perished. Those who survived were forced to adapt to the new Realm. As they became better suited to oceanic Subspace they became less able to tolerate spending time in the Heavens. Still, their new home was vast—even after Venus and eventually Mars lost their oceans, the Abyss remained the largest terrestrial Realm.

The new Abyssals cultivated their civilization in the deepest, darkest, recess of Subspace while their forgotten Celestial kin forged alliances and waged wars alongside the Silicates. Cut off from the Heavens, the Abyssals were inevitably drawn into contact with the Rokea, Mer, and now-lost Oceanic Ondines.

The Tidal Event...

... fatally disrupted the Kites' Subspace empires. Radiation poured into Subspace and crushed the Kites' gossamer colonies. Faced with the apocalyptic threat of their entire species dying both the Celestials and the Abyssals independently decided to Surface. Once there the long lost kin quickly discovered each other. The Deep Ones, having significantly more experience in the strange environment the Kites now found themselves welcomed the Celestials with open arms. For some time the needs of survival overshadowed any differences that had emerged between the Kites, and peace reigned.

Modern Nights...

... see deep fractures in Kite society. While the Abyssals were initially welcoming and hospitable to their long-lost relatives, the Celestials' inexperience navigating Surface life created friction. Starved for Zed, the Celestials wreaked havoc on the environment and the Low-emitter population with their reckless harvesting operations. More familiar with the deprivation caused by living nearer to the Surface, the Abyssals had long ago gone through this stage in their development and had little patience for the Celestials' gluttony. For their part, the Celestials saw the Abyssals' philosophy of encouraging humanity to view Abyssal Space with wonder and reverence as a naive effort at compromise with the very

Stereotypes

From Tritium's Mission Logs:

Humans
Dominant species civilization evaluation complete: Level 0.73/3. Within the next several hundred years they may achieve mastery of their planet's energy. Steps must be taken to hinder their growth as a civilization--as they become more adept at producing energy they will find new ways to poison Subspace.

Silicates
We relied on them during the Pyrean Epoch, today we rely on them to build the infrastructure that will allow us to return to the Heavens.

Abyssals
Their support of human expeditions into Subspace are worse than useless; they're dangerous.

Forgotten
What are they complaining about now?

Boggans
The Surface is home to Countless who were never part of Harmony and seem to have no knowledge of Subspace. Are they an evolutionary dead end that simply refuses to die? Something else?

Void Engineers
Recovered mission logs from the LPC Facility on Luna indicate that Humans must be capable of intentionally generating and projecting huge amounts of Radiation. Measures must be taken. Soon.

creatures who had poisoned Subspace.

The Prophets' mission found fertile ground among the Celestials. For their part the Abyssals were repulsed by the revelation that the Prophets were intentionally infecting the Surface with Harmonic Truth.

Naming Conventions

Kites name themselves for the gasses & fluids they've gathered to build their xenoforms. An unflappable Agent of Harmony might style herself after a noble gas such as xeon or helium, while a brilliant Collectivist engineer might name herself after a highly reactive gas such as ethylene or ozone.

Unleashing

One can always tell a kite unleashing—their innate command of Field Theory is evident, even if they did not decide to develop it into a conscious skill. Small objects (such as coinage, leaves, and paper) are thrown and scattered, metal objects become magnetized and naturally magnetic things lose their attractive force. Fluids, such as wind, electrostatic dust, and water either become unnaturaly calm or dangerously turbulent.

Hosts

Kites' human form conveys the idea that some part of them is stretched. They might have an unusually willowy torso, or oddly long limbs, or a model-thin neck. There is often a subtle inhuman tint to their skin. Their eyes are unclear, as if clouded or else have visible motes.

Kites gravitate toward lifestyles that allow them to exist in fluid spaces—deep sea divers, sky-divers, pilots, sailors (especially of wind-driven craft).

Xenoform

Like other invertebrates, Kites have radial rather than bilateral symmetry. Their structure is provided not by bones, but by a dark matter clathrate that traps their gaseous or fluidic matter in a series of pressurized bladders. Their bodies are translucent, and so the whirling gas and crystalised dark matter filaments are visible to all. Like certain sea creatures, Kites move by squeezing and expelling fluid jets. Internal combustion of reactive gases produces a kind of bioluminescence.

Affinity Realm: Field Theory

Cladewide Mutations

Utility Mutation: Ialdagorth's Arms
All Kites have tentacles visible to those with holographic senses. Most commonly, these emerge from between the shoulders or somewhere on the arms. These limbs function in every way one might expect a prehensile limb lacking a thumb to, and form the basis for many common advanced Mutations. Use of this Mutation in the presence of unmodified humans provokes Anthropic Hostility. The Arms provide a base for many other common Mutations.
Tell: Countless with additional limbs manifest polydactylism in their human forms. Their additional fingers (or toes) are vestigial and provide no useful benefit.

Enhanced Sense Mutation: Gas Sense
Kites can correctly identify any gas by smelling it (even those gasses that humans find tasteless and odorless). [Roll Alertness + Perception against difficulty 7].
Tell: Countless with gas sense have a distinctly inhuman eye-color. Most often this Tell gives their human form cloudy or banded irises or a shower of iridescent motes swimming through the white.

Abyssal Species Traits

Origin Mutation: The Abyss
Ignore the negative effects of the Cold and High Pressure Conditions. Ignore the Anaerobic Condition when in water.
Tell: Abyssals carry the mark of their lightless home on your skin. All Abyssals are tragically ashen.

Adaptation: Dark Matter Lattice
The Abyssals have evolved to form denser clathrate "skeletons" than their Heavenly cousins. Deep Ones retain some of this enhancement and can survive at heavier pressures than pure humans could. While in Xenoform an Abyssal Kite negates the damage they would otherwise take from dangerously high pressure exposure. Additionally, Deep Ones do not suffer decompression sickness when moving from high pressure to normal pressure conditions.

Adaptation: Deep Apnea
Abyssals receive an automatic success on rolls to perform stunts in water. They cannot botch a roll related to moving in water.

Challenge: Aphonia
Deep Ones lack the ability to speak. They're perfectly capable of hearing, but for whatever reason their Implantation interferes with their Host's ability to produce sound (if the Host was capable of it before). Countless chirurgeons have spent decades studying the Deep Ones' silence, but are no closer to understanding the mystery. Most, when pressed, will simply shrug and opine that there must be some quirk of divergent evolution and change the subject.

Celestial Species Traits

Origin Mutation: The Heavens
Ignore the negative effects of Zero/Microgravity. Treat Low Gravity as the 1G Condition. Triple the number of rounds a Celestial can be expose to Dangerously Low Pressure and Anaerobic Conditions before they begin taking damage.
Tell: Celestials lack the gross muscle mass to comfortably exist on the Surface. Treat the 1G Condition as Heavy Gravity, Heavy Gravity and Dangerous Gravity.

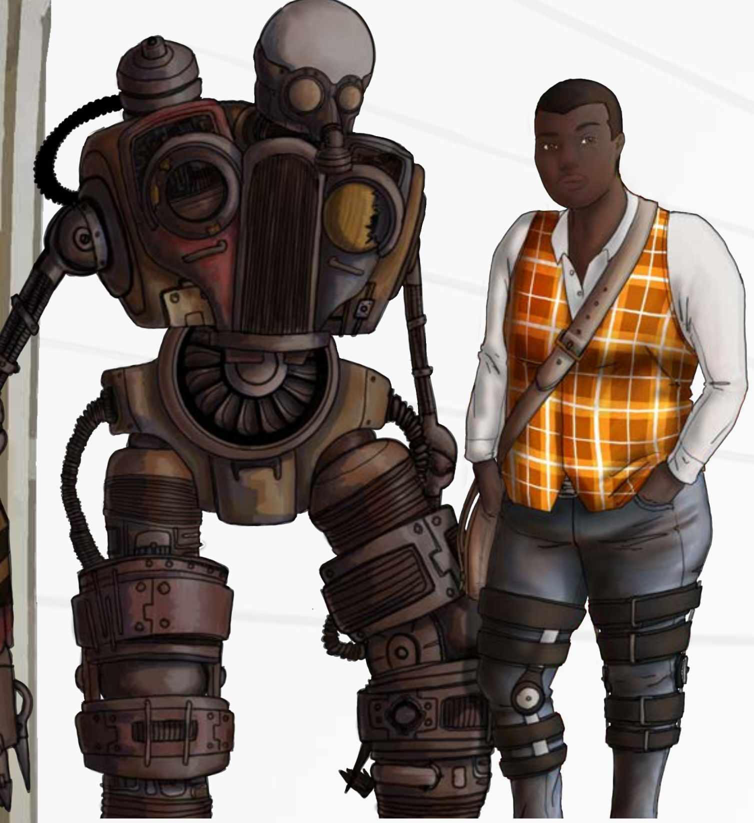
Adaptation: Dark Energy Halo
By expelling some of their stored Zero Point Energy Void Kites can nullify gravity in a very small area around themselves. To affect themself the Kite spends a point of Zed. Affecting themself and everyone they're touching costs an additional point of Zed. Both versions of this ability are free in Xenoform. Everyone under the Halo has the microgravity condition applied to them. The Kite can then move at up to their normal speed in any direction. Stunts require an appropriate roll. Attempting stunts while carrying others imposes a +1 difficulty penalty per passenger.

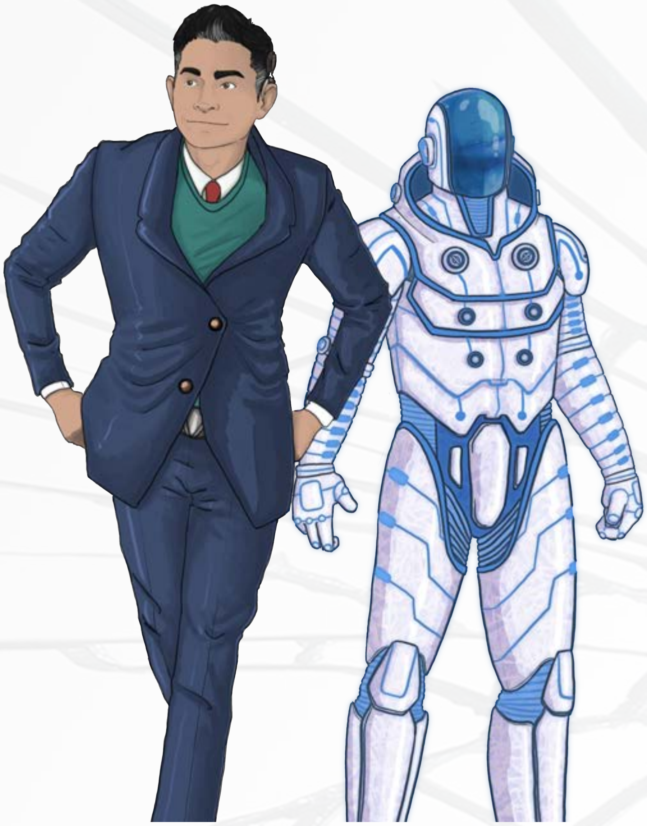
Adaptation: Microgravity Acrobat
Celestials have two holographic dots of Dexterity, even if this brings them above the normal maximum of five. These dots may only be accessed while the Celestial is under the Zero/Microgravity and Low Gravity Conditions. Celestials cannot botch Athletics rolls while under those Conditions.

Challenge: Fluttering Interest
Celestials are fascinated by new ideas. While this makes them great generalists, they have trouble concentrating long enough to achieve mastery. Void Kites pay double the XP cost of the fifth dot of any ability.

Silicates

[Digital Natives, Drones (derogatory), Aidoneus, Recluses (derogatory)]





The Birth of Worlds...

... Marked the beginning of time for the Silicates. These invaders made their bodies of heavy matter: ices, salts, metals and, of course, silicates were only a delicate crystalline pattern in the dust. Waiting to be destroyed by wind, heat, cold, electrostatic erosion, or an impact. The first revolution in Silicate biology was the discovery of self-replication. As things often go with innovation, many Silicates discovered slightly different methods of expanding their “bodies” at nearly the same time. As Sol’s first worlds were accreting in cataclysmic collisions the Silicates were replicating their crystalline patterns to cover the surfaces of the comets, asteroids, and tiny planetoids in beautiful fractal patterns.

Many Silicates were the only life to emerge on their rocks. Once they'd fully explored their environments, content with having experienced all the universe had to offer these became inert. Others set goals for self-refinement, making the fractal patterns of their bodies more beautiful by correcting the disturbances and blemishes. Whether by accident or design, some of these self-refining Silicates discovered the first functional Refinements: primitive sensors and manipulators that allowed them to perceive and interact with Subspace beyond their core bodies. No longer blind, Silicates wondered what else might be out there in the Heavens.

Everything changed when three different Silicates by chance created similar Refinements for sensing and interacting, allowing the to communicate across the vastness of space. Realizing for the first time that there was other intelligent life like them in the solar system, The Three Nameless Silicates laid the groundwork for their first colony. They conspired to cause their bodies to collide in the space between Mars and Jupiter.

Prior to the birth of Phaeton Silicates that became bored simply went inert and inactive. Dormant, rather than dead, periodic ZPE waves might awaken them for a brief time before they again fell inert. The collision of the Nameless Ones host asteroids caused the first true deaths among the Silicates. The fifth terrestrial world was born from the collision. Over time the Three Nameless Silicates' Core Data survived the impact and assimilated the new world's matter, interacted with each other, and eventually merged. This new amalgam entity was new and different enough from what its constituent personalities had once been that it decided it was the next evolutionary form of the Silicates. It was so much greater than its parts that it called itself a Titan, and named its new world Phaeton.

Phaeton was fantastically curious and spent the majority of its life searching for other life. It drew dozens of the Inert Ones out of their hibernations and taught them how to interact with the Holographic Universe around them. The first great Silicate civilization was born.

At roughly the same time, the Titanic Silicates Rhea and Theia were born and came into contact with the stranded inner Kites. The Kites, Rhea, and Theia conspired to create something entirely new. The cataclysmic merger of Rhea and Theia triggered a period of dynamic and unstable time near the impact site. When the Temporal Field finally returned to normal, the Earth, the moon, Superficial Reality, and no less than three new Subspatial Realms had been created.

The Homeworld Cataclysm…

… ended the Titanic Era. Though the cause was never identified, the result is obvious. Phaeton shattered. Factions of surviving Silicates blamed one another for the death of Phaeton. Scattered through Sol, the survivors came into contact with the Kites. Together, Factions coalesced around their new homes: The Pyrean Empire of the Venusian and Mercurial Countless were the dominant force in the inner solar system, the Jovian Federation was the largest overall, and the elusive Saturnine preyed on the wounded from the other sides.

There were rumors of a lost faction who claimed the new Earth and its angel moon as their home, but scouting parties simply did not return from there. The power players had bigger concerns than a bunch of recluses living in a toxic cesspit.

A small group of Silicates saw the opening volleys of the Sidereal Wars and recoiled. As the three Sidereal Empires devoted more and more of their time to warring with each other, they developed increasingly cruel methods for causing suffering. The final straw for these Hidden Ones was the discovery that the Saturnine were developing a Radiation-based weapon that would render swaths of Subspace uninhabitable for centuries. Consensus was soon reached: without conclusive evidence all causes of Phaeton's Shattering were equally plausible; therefore assigning blame was pointless.

Few in number and separated by the Sidereal Wars' various fronts, they conspired to converge on a new home in secret. One where they could live apart from the whirlwind of destruction taking place in the Heavens. Taking their name from their purpose, the Aidoneus, or the Unseen, formed their society around a single goal—creating a new Phaeton, free from the excesses of the old one. The needs of this goal allowed a single conclusion in all cases: either through action or inaction the Silicates brought the Shattering on themselves. Burrowing deep into the Earth's Biospheric Space, the Aidoneus discovered that the Surface world was a thin veneer concealing an entirely undiscovered Subspatial Realm. There, amidst the slow but turbulent currents and plentiful material resources of Hades they built their new home. The Aidoneus quickly discovered the few surviving Theian and Rhean Silicates hidden away by the creation of the Earth and Luna, and helped them recover from the shock of thew new individuality outside of their Titans. Rather than repeat the Primeval Silicates' mistakes the Aidoneus declined the politics of empire and, instead, devoted themselves to Refinement of themselves and their new home.

The inevitable incursion teams (usually from the Pyrean Alliance) were met with overwhelming force and an ultimatum —Surrender or perish. Unsuited to the hellish environment of the early Earth, the Pyrean Voidships were at a significant disadvantage when confronted by Hadean Drillships, and skirmishes went as one might expect. Aidoneus' secrecy thus maintained by this forced assimilation, they focused on taming the roiling magma seas of their new home.

As Earth and the Moon drew farther apart, and they lost their shared atmospheres of molten particulate. The Gaean and Selenitic Hadean Realms remained linked, but Luna was cooling much more quickly than the Titans planned. Most of the Selenitic Aidoneus migrated to Gaean Hades, but some remained on Luna until the bitter end. What became of them is not known, but no Selenitic Silicates Surfaced in the aftermath of the Tidal Event.

The Sidereal Wars…

… would have continued until the sun burned out were it not for the Tidal Event. Utterly unprepared for the Tidal Event battle fleets, outposts, and even cities were washed away by the shockwave. Millions died instantly. Those who survived the initial onslaught were forced to Surface or else scrounge for scraps in the Tidal Event's destructive wake.

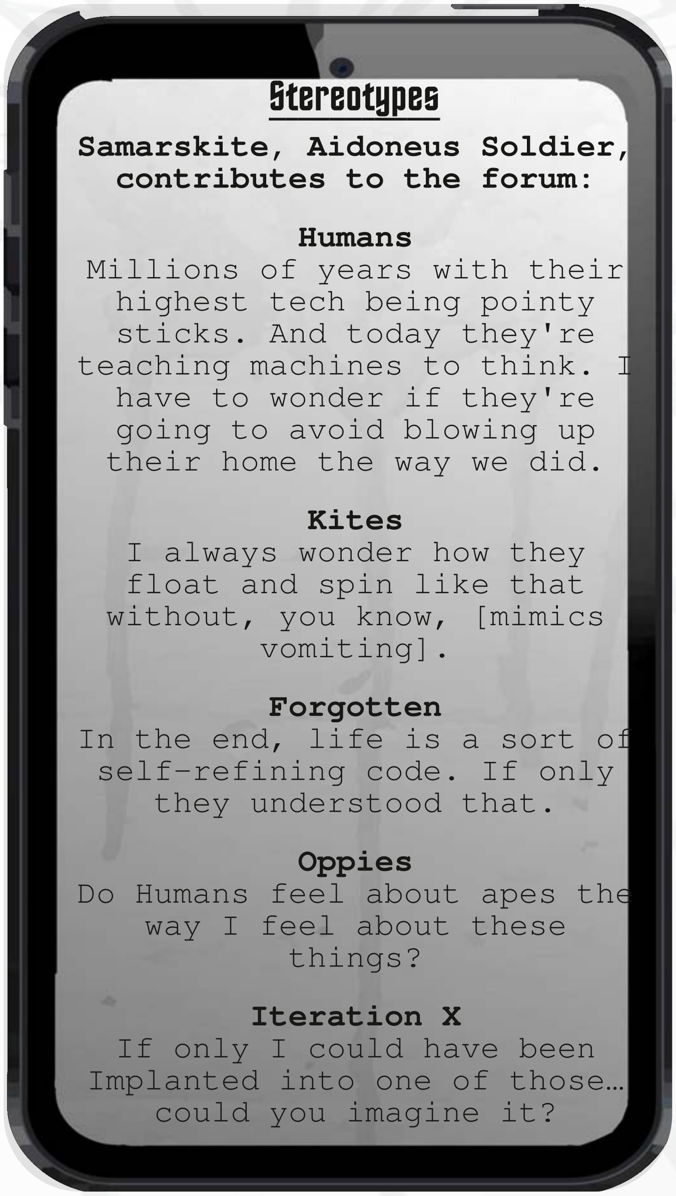
In some ways the Unseen fared worse. Long ago they had begun to explore a philosophy of Refining the Other, and found humanity to be an acceptable work medium. Aidoneus who sought to abduct and cultivate humans created numerous Breakthroughs to the Surface. Those Breakthroughs were extremely low-resistance pathways for the Tidal Event's Radiation. This so disrupted Hades that long-understood magma currents reversed themselves or disappeared entirely. New currents rendered pre-Event navigation charts useless. Many Aidoneus estates were destroyed in the initial chaos. More still lost access to their logistics networks and were forced into Dormancy.

Reunited on the Surface, the surviving Sidereals and Aidoneus had a tense reunion. Encouraged to find that their Sidereal cousins had, at last, put an end to their pointless war, the Aidoneus decided to wait and see what other maturation the Tidal Event inspired. Both sides made tentative overtures toward cooperation.

The Aidoneus' old relationship with the

Surface was rocked by the Tidal Event. How were they to take the wholesale destruction of their civilization but as a declaration of war?

As children of the Titans Phaeton, Rhea, and Theias the Aidoneus collectively preserved large parts of the Titans' knowledge, personality, and goals. Though the Aidoneus viewed Refinement of Self as a core part of the Silicate identity, the Sidereals never developed the same passionate aesthetic—guided by the needs of the Sidereal Wars, their Refinements focused on function over form. Similarly, the Sidereals wondered at their cousins' Refinement of Other. What purpose did guiding human evolution serve?



Stereotypes

Samarskite, Aidoneus Soldier, contributes to the forum:

Humans
Millions of years with their highest tech being pointy sticks. And today they're teaching machines to think. I have to wonder if they're going to avoid blowing up their home the way we did.

Kites
I always wonder how they float and spin like that without, you know, [mimics vomiting].

Forgotten
In the end, life is a sort of self-refining code. If only they understood that.

Oppies
Do Humans feel about apes the way I feel about these things?

Iteration X
If only I could have been Implanted into one of those… could you imagine it?

As newcomers, the Sidereals saw the Surface with eyes unclouded by past relationships with humanity and beheld a wonder. The Aidoneus' project of refining humanity had lead the humans to create a new Subspatial Realm from the bones of Rhea and Theia. Humanity’s global communication networks tapped into the sleeping mind of Rhea and Theia's Titanic child; Gaea. After eons of subtle direction from the Aidoneus, Humanity's machines and technology were astonishingly similar to ancient Phaeton’s vast network of minds and had provided innumerable potential Breakthroughs to this Realm. The Sidereals had little difficulty opening these Breakthroughs to Digital Subspace. Almost as soon as they'd been reunited with the Aidoneus, the newly minted Digital Natives disappeared.

Today…

… there is precious little commerce between the new Digital Natives and Aidoneus. Each group is primarily concerned with taming their chosen frontier. Aidoneus focus on returning to and rebuilding Hades, while the former Sidereals work to expand the potential of human-made machines.

By far the least represented Clade among the Prophets, those who convert do so because they believe in the Prophets’ mission. Digital Prophets believe that deleting the Surface will free Digital Subspace from the restrictions imposed by the Internet's Superficial aspect. Aidoneus Prophets are bitter about Humanity repaying their long, quiet, patronage with the Tidal Event.

Naming Conventions

Silicates name themselves after the types of crystalline structures that make up their cores. Digital Natives' cores were most often made from rare-Earth metals (such as Samarskite or Promethium), while Aidoneus' cores incorporated material from the Earth's mantle (such as Galena or Hematite).

Unleashing

Silicate unleashings emphasize traditionally banal parts of the waking world—machine noises seem louder or emanate from nowhere, the air conditioning or heating becomes oppressive, living things take on inorganic features (skin has a metallic sheen, a campfire seems to be made of crystal, etc) and raw inorganic materials take on qualities of products they may be made into (sand appears to have circuitry "veins", raw ore briefly appears to be its refined counterparts, wreckage rebuilds into surprising and creative new forms.)

Hosts

Silicate Sapiologists noticed striking similarities between human DNA and Silicate core data. This made Implantation a simple matter of creating a common language that could be utilized by both systems. Core Data 2.0 (or Common Core) produces a synthetic genome that utilizes three pairs of nucleotides instead of the usual Human two. The extra coding capacity produces and supports the Countless being's Xenoform, as well as providing the basis for their cybernetic Refinements.

Refinements provide the lion's share of Silicate Tells. Their Hosts tend to be those who use assistive equipment (such as leg, arm, and spinal braces), medical implants (like insulin pumps, pacemakers, and cochlear implants), and many others. Like Dougalsidhe, their disabilities are usually nonissues —managed by their Holographic/ Superficial technology (unless their player decides to take a disability Flaw).

Xenoform

Primeval Silicate cores resembled nothing so much as massive boulders and asteroids. By the time of the Shattering pursuit of refinement miniaturized Cores down to the size of hand-held objects. This allowed the Silicates to create and interface with multiple purpose-designed bodies. Though the Joining confines Silicates to a single body, they retain the ability to swap out custom Holographic equipment. Individual Silicates' Xenoforms are as varied as their aesthetics. Aidoneus design and utilize Refinements to protect themselves from the dangers of Hadean Subspace. Unfortunately, these Xenotech devices do nothing for the Human silhouette and leave the Silicate's Xenoform resembling (at best) a Human wearing a variety of life support equipment and at worst a mobile appliance. Digital Natives' Refinements are sleek Devices that improve their cognitive abilities or allow them to better interface with machinery.

Affinity: Fermion Sculpting

Cladewide Traits

Adaptation: Holographic Refinements
Silicate bio-engineers are careful to craft Joinings that preserve the quintessential traits of the Clade. Chief among these is the ability to self-Refine. Though their Human hosts lack the ability to direct their own evolution (for now!), Silicates retain the ability to build and integrate

new xenotechnological wonders into their bodies. During story downtime any Silicate may sacrifice a permanent point of Zed to craft a new Mutation for themself.

Challenge: Technosis
As partly biological and partly technological Silicates are vulnerable to the diseases of both. Silicate immune systems are as robust as a normal human’s, and they can resist most common illnesses. Likewise anti-malware Refinements protect them from most computer viruses. Encountering novel or purpose-made biological or technological infections can be catastrophic for a Silicate. Contracting a computer virus prompts the Host to reject the Countless' Holographic presence, triggering Anthropic Hostility. Contracting a biological illness causes the Countless' Holographic body to react similarly, generating a point of Harmonic Truth.

Aidoneus Species Traits

Origin Mutation: Hades
Aidoneus evolved in the deepest parts of the Earth and long to return to their home. Though better suited to life on the surface than others, Aidoneus’ Challenges and Tells attract unwelcome attention from humans. Though they are fundamentally human now, the Hidden Ones’ anatomy includes synthetic reinforcement to their soft tissues. Similar to the way steel helps to strengthen concrete, the addition of these cybernetic fibers to Aidoneus muscle, skin, and bone allows them to withstand

Machines & Meaty Issues

Silicates in their natural state are ageless, agender, space rocks. They struggle to understand human impositions like gender, class, and race. Americans think of bridges as masculine and describe them as “strong”, “imposing”, and “impressive”. Germans think of bridges as feminine and describe them as “elegant”, “shapely”, and “beautiful”. British stereotypes about darker complected people are different from Indians’. Yorubans defer to elders, while Americans are unsettled by advanced aging. While individuals are unique and may hold uncommon views on certain topics, very few people reject all of their cultural heritage. All of this is to say that navigating the expectations people place on our bodies is extremely complicated, and until we’re taken out of our native context we do it almost instinctively by the time we’re adults.

Silicates aren’t hard-wired for this sort of thing the way humans are. Alone among the Countless, their First Emergence survivalism training includes lengthy and in-depth lessons on the topic of “how to be a human that looks like you”. Without that education (and sometimes even with it) Silicates would be seen as iconoclasts who simply refuse to fit in, and unintentionally attract all kinds of unwanted human attention. Many silicates forgo this “performance” when they’re in Countless-dominated spaces, while others stay “in character” all the time to avoid accidentally slipping while among humans. Quite a few take the opportunity of the Countless’ permissiveness to test out new mannerisms and modes of dress.

gravity and pressures that would crush other demi-humans. Downgrade the effects of High Pressure and Deadly Gravity Conditions by one step.
Tell: Although the fascial alloys utilized in this Refinement aren't rejected outright by the human body, all Aidoneus develop an immune reaction similar to skin rashes. This condition is purely cosmetic and cannot be transmitted to others, but humans can be put off by it.

Adaptation: Tremorsense
By striking a solid object and feeling the vibration from the impact echo back an aidoneus can accurately judge the material's rough composition and thickness [roll Perception + Dowsing].

Downgrade Damage Mutation: Zero Suit
By necessity Aidoneus bodies incorporate substantial body armor and cooling systems. Downgrade heat and mundane radiation damage by one step. The elements of the Zero Suit cannot be removed without surgery. The Zero Suit Mutation includes joints and ports for interfacing newly designed Refinements.
Tell: The most common atavistic expression of the Zero Suit is visible scarring or burns on the neck, shoulders, chest, hips, knees, elbows, wrists, and ankles--essentially any place the armor would need a joint, an Aidoneus body will have a visible oddness. To those with inhuman senses, the joints appear to be glowing channels or veins.

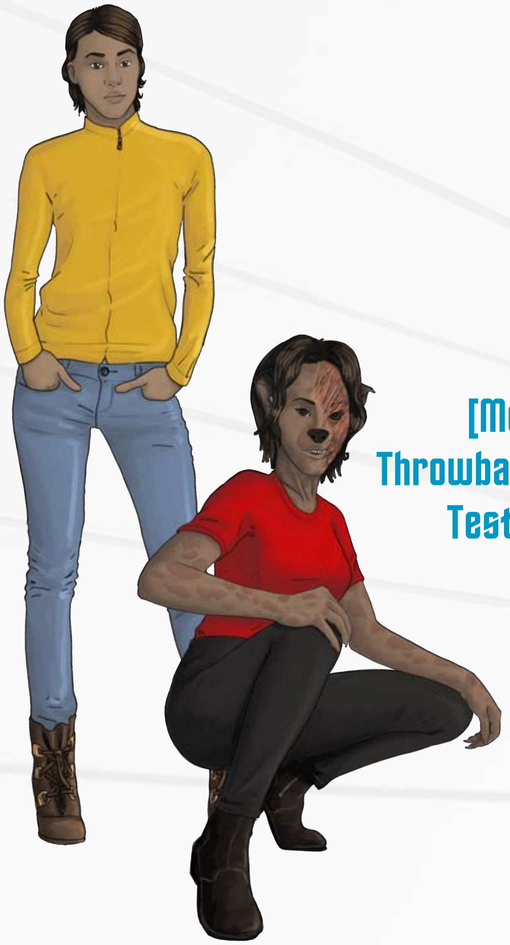
Digital Natives Species Traits

Origin Mutation: Digital Subspace
Possibly the youngest branch on the Countless family tree, the Digital Natives are defined by their Mind/Machine Interface implants. The M/MI is an impressive xenotech Refinement that allows Silicates to project their minds into Digital Subspace. This ability provides a level of protection against harm. Countless who enter Subspace physically are fully present and suffer Superficial wounds from Holographic damage. The M/MI allows Silicates to project only their Xenoform into Digital Subspace. Taking a fatal amount of Holographic damage still forces the Silicate into Dormancy, but their Host body is left intact and they will Emerge later.
Additionally, Silicates may use their M/MI to overcharge a piece of mundane technology. By infusing mundane tech with a point of their Zed Digital Natives can overcome the device's accumulated Radiation and awaken its conscious mind. Treat this use of the M/MI as an application of Willow Whisper.
Tell: Countless with an M/MI installed have a noticeable growth at the base of their skulls. Its appearance varies--for some it takes the form of a misplaced extra cervical vertebra, for others it appears to be a large cyst, still others endure doctors wanting to biopsy their "tumor" every time they go in for a cough.

Adaptation: Digital Native
Digital Natives get two free dots in the Computer skill, even if this takes them above the normal maximum. Digital Natives can never botch a Computer roll.
Utility Mutation: Internal Chronometer
The strangest property of Digital Subspace is its time dilation. Ordinary Countless (and other Changelings) have to utilize powerful Arts or create Treasures to help them adjust to different Systems' clockspeed. Digital Natives host a sensor suite and a small processor that allow them to automatically adjust to any environmental time dilation effect (such as those present in Digital Subspace, on the surface of a super-massive planet, or

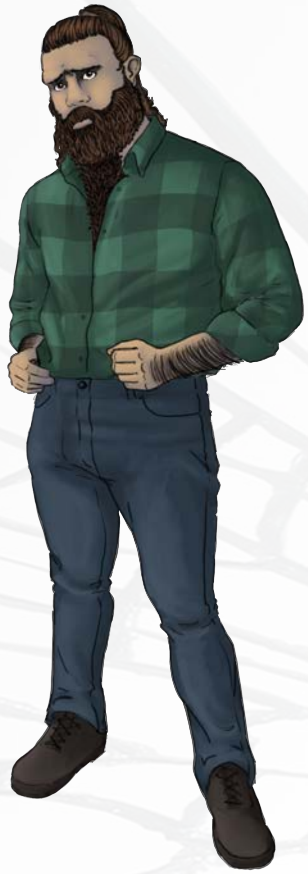
within a Void Engineer station observing a nearby black hole). Non-environmental time dilations that target a Digital Native (such as applications of Chronos, the Time Sphere, etc) have a +1 difficulty penalty. The Internal Chronometer does not help Digital Natives cope with time effects that effect them indirectly (such as a Vampire's Celerity).

Tell: Countless who make use of the Internal Chronometer tick softly. This provides a +1 difficulty penalty to certain uses of Stealth.



Forgotten

[Metamorphs, Ancestors, Throwbacks (derogatory), Explorers, Test Subjects (derogatory)]



The emergence of life…

… wasn't just one moment in one place. Life's first moments were tenuous, delicate, and multitudinous. On Earth alone life's creation had many false starts and dead ends before it finally took hold. Factor in life on other worlds and what at first seems like a very simple bit of science (right materials plus right conditions plus time equals life) becomes more of an art. The Forgotten know that life's potential isn't limited to just the way life formed on the Surface. Their Xenoform is the most varied of all the Countless. Each one takes its Holographic body from the memory of some long-dead creature.

The story of the Forgotten begins with death. All of the rocky bodies in the solar system could potentially have been the birthplace of the Forgotten. From Earth's primeval soup to the methane seas of Titan to Pluto's heart-shaped ice sea to many other places that have the correct combination of energy gradient and chemistry. Where-ever life begins, death follows. The death of entire species carries a kind of power, and this power was similar enough to Zed that it attracted a new wave of Countless. Embroiled in their petty struggles, the other Countless took little note of the new bud on their family tree. Generally weaker and more vulnerable to the harshness of the Heavens, the Abyss, and Hades, the early Forgotten and other proto-Countless had little opportunity to encounter each other. Those rare encounters were most often between the Abyssals or the Aidoneus and the Ancestors.

The long period between the beginnings of life and the humanity subjugating the Surface was a golden age for the Ancestors. Life's many permutations were born, thrived for a time, and then died off. This process created legions of Ancestors, each imbued with their species unique gifts. Their long history of life on and near the Surface makes the Ancestors the most likely of all the Countless to have standing relationships with other inhuman denizens of the World of Darkness, particularly the Sundering-era Fae and the Fera.

Nothing golden remains, and as humanity colonized the planet their calcifying infection spread with them. The Ancestors watched with horror as the War of Rage broke out between their friends and the Garou, many hiding the Fera they could spirit away from the Garou's Radiation-tainted claws. Fewer and fewer places were left untouched by their Radiation and the Ancestors were forced to retreat again. Soon Superficial Reality became so hostile to them that the Ancestors' homes became so isolated that they formed a sort of Shadow Biosphere in Subspace.

Humanity's First steps into space...

… went mostly unmarked by the Countless, but not the Forgotten. Where humanity fears to go they send other animals first. Flies, rabbits, dogs, cats, monkeys, and even goldfish and sheep were the humans' first test pilots, sent up in balloons, planes and finally, rockets. Bacteria, fungus, and other microscopic creatures were inadvertently brought along. Since the time of Rhea and Theia's deaths the near-Earth Heavens' Irradiation had steadily grown. By the time humanity began to explore flight and rocketry, the space between the Earth and Luna had grown so Irradiated that it repelled all but the most determined Unbound Countless. Despite the, for the time period, high Anthropic Radiation levels ZPE was still the dominant force in near-Earth Subspace and the pioneers humanity sent into the Void were exposed, often terminally.

These early explorations were tentative and many left their victims abandoned in the Heavens. Human science only recently officially acknowledged the existence of vacuum energy, but the Technocratic Union has records of experiments going back as far as the Renaissance detailing experiments to determine its effects on living things. Further back in their records things get more speculative, but the story of Daedalus and Icarus is sometimes seen as early evidence of the dangerous effect of Zed on Biospheric life.

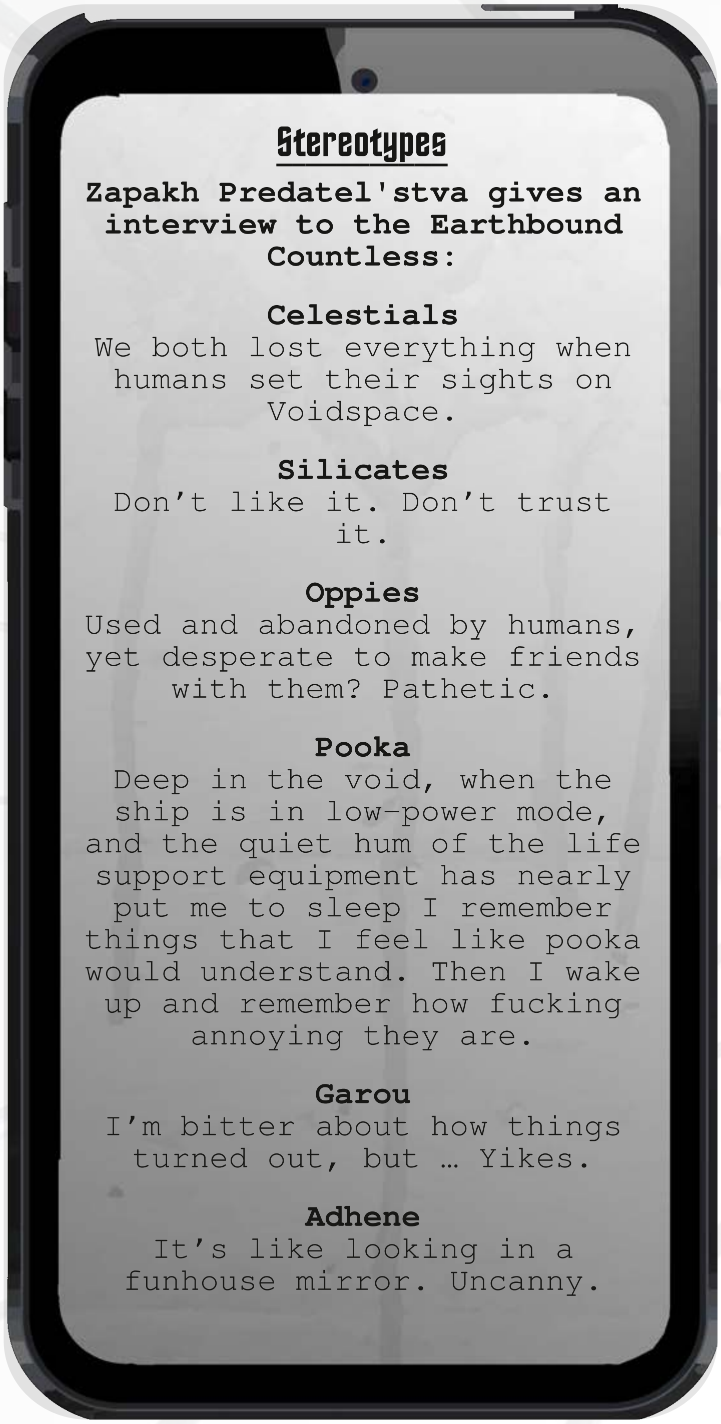
Humanity's push to reach the Heavens was supercharged by the discovery of powered flight and rocketry, but the Union needed more time to make Voidspace safe for humans. Animals were fired into space in capsules with monitoring equipment. Human scientists made observations and recorded results and usually "ended" the missions after only a few hours. The Technomancers continued to observe after the mortal space agencies officially ended the missions. Test Subjects underwent unexpected and dangerous mutations from exposure to Deep Tides. Every Forgotten created from these experiments has patchy memories of their flights. At the end of the second data collection phase of their missions every one of the Explorers was terminated remotely to prevent unforeseen consequences. The Union believed the Explorers' contributions to science ended here and moved on with their project.

The Explorers' corpses, infused with void energy and host to resilient micro-organisms, made welcoming hosts for the last few of the invaders to emerge from the Anthropic Horizon. Adrift in their capsules and recently possessed, these Countless had their childhoods cut short by the Tidal Event.

The infection began...

... with a rocket launch at Cape Canaveral and quickly spilled into all Subspatial Realms. It wouldn't be understood until much later that this was humanity's answer to Zed's effect on the Superficial life. The product of generations of Technocratic and mortal effort, the Tidal Event blasted subspace with Anthropic Radiation and cleared the path for humans to approach now-dead Luna. Shielded somewhat by their human-made spacecraft and closest to the Surface, Explorers fared the best of all the Forgotten. They "only" had to survive being drawn toward the Earth by the Radiation wave's trough to Surface.

Every action has an equal and opposite reaction, and the Tidal Event was a huge action. In reaction to the outpouring of Anthropic Radiation, the energetic fields that underlay the Holographic Universe formed cysts around Superficial Reality. Though "proximity" isn't always a relevant concept in describing the Holographic Universe, the Shadow Biosphere was in most accountings the "closest" Realm to the Surface. Even after the Tidal Event it is possible to find Shallowings, places where Superficial Reality and the Shadow are close enough to touch each other. Unfortunately, those who journey unprepared into Subspace find their former homes poisoned by Anthropic Radiation, and the Shadow is no different. Formerly safe environments have spawned new horrors and unfamiliar dangers.



Stereotypes

Zapakh Predatel'stva gives an interview to the Earthbound Countless:

Celestials
We both lost everything when humans set their sights on Voidspace.

Silicates
Don't like it. Don't trust it.

Oppies
Used and abandoned by humans, yet desperate to make friends with them? Pathetic.

Pooka
Deep in the void, when the ship is in low-power mode, and the quiet hum of the life support equipment has nearly put me to sleep I remember things that I feel like pooka would understand. Then I wake up and remember how fucking annoying they are.

Garou
I'm bitter about how things turned out, but … Yikes.

Adhene
It's like looking in a funhouse mirror. Uncanny.

Naming Conventions

Ancestors and Explorers have very different name. Explorers cast aside the names humans gave them and take new names from their first experiences as Countless: Albert II might prefer to style himself "Dawn Refracted by Frozen Blood", while Laika now goes by "Zapakh Predatel'stva".

Ancestors take special pride in their

names. As the last memorial to their entire species, Ancestors will incorporate their species' name into their name or else use part of it as a name. The Tasmanian Tiger simply goes by "Taz", while some of "Ned"'s human acquaintances say he looks and acts a little bit like a Neanderthal.

Unleashing

Forgotten Unleashings draw from the individual's history. Carnivorous Ancestors' Unleashing makes people nervous and sharpens perception the way an adrenaline rush might. Near-human Ancestors' Unleashings make fires brighter, food rarer, and inspire familial instincts. Explorers' Unleashings provoke malfunctions in technology, especially medical technology, and evoke the experience of decomposition.

Hosts

Should they want it the Forgotten have an easier relationship with humanity than the other Countless. This isn't to say that it is an easy relationship, only that as formerly living things the Forgotten have insight into the state of currently living things. Forgotten Hosts are often humans who work in life-adjacent sciences; biologists, paleo-anthropologists, doctors of space medicine, archeologists, zoologists, and more than a few quack crypto-zoologists. As one would expect, their human forms are as varied as they are, but there are certain common Tells.

Xenoform

Forgotten Xenoforms are as varied as Silicates'. Whether Explorer or Ancestor, all Forgotten Xenoforms exist on a spectrum somewhere between human and animal. Sabertooth's Xenoform is in the nightmare-fuel middle territory of that line: a huge bipedal sabertoothed tiger with human hands and a nearly human face. On either end you get Forgotten that appear more human-like or more animal-like, but even at the extremes none of them could pass as anything other than a monster.

As amalgamations of humans and extinct creatures ancestor Xenoforms are the most straightforward. The of their deaths leave some Forgotten explorers with bits of monitoring equipment buried in their otherwise familiar animal bodies. Likewise, very few Explorers' Xenoforms are completely free of the rot and decomposition that took place before their fragment of Harmony possessed them.

Affinity Realm: Fields or Nature

Cladewide Traits

Clade Adaptation: Shapeshifting
Almost every Forgotten has both a human and an animal form. When alone or in Xenoform Forgotten can shapeshift between these forms at will. Transforming in the presence of unmodified humans costs a point of Zed and provokes Anthropic Hostility.

Ancestor Species Traits

Origin Mutation: Shadow Biosphere
The Shadow Biosphere has more in common with Biospheric Space than the other Subspatial Realms. Where the other Countless developed their Theories to explain their relationship with the natural laws of Subspace, the Ancestors share a more naturalistic paradigm. Ancestors are incapable of learning any Theories and, instead, may learn Realms as other changelings do.
Tell: Ancestors bodies reject

technological interference far more strongly than they otherwise should. Common human medical implants (insulin pumps, artificial lenses, pacemakers, etc) are always rejected, which may result in catastrophe.

Variable Mutation: Evolutionary Edge Choose one of the following: Sense Mutation, Natural Weapon, Near Relative, or Autotroph. [For more information on building your own Mutations, see "Further Permutations: Directed Evolution"]

Enhanced, Novel, or Inhuman Sense Mutation

Ancestors with this Edge have either a well-developed sense that humans lack (sonar, electric fields, magnetic fields, pressure, etc) or an improved version of a normal human sense (low-light vision, keen nose, sharper hearing, etc). This Edge functions identically to other Enhanced, Novel, or Inhuman Sense Mutations.

Upgrade Damage Type Mutation: Natural Weapon

Ancestors with this Edge have a natural weapon that humans lack (such as claws, a horn, sharp teeth, etc) and upgrade unarmed Holographic attacks down with their natural weapons from Bashing to Lethal damage. This Edge functions identically to other Upgrade Damage Type Mutations.

Utility Mutation: Near Relative

You were a close enough relative to modern humans that your Xenoform can pass casual inspection. As long as you are not doing anything obviously supernatural (and you have no inhuman Mutations), simply being in Xenoform does not provoke Anthropic Hostility. Prolonged or expert scrutiny may still trigger Anthropic Hostility at the Storyteller’s discretion.

Tell: Ancestors with this Edge lose access to the shapeshift Adaptation, but gain the ability to gather Zed from human-focused Epiphanies as the Kithain do.

Utility Mutation: Autotroph

You were a member of a species of plants, lichens, algae, or other creatures capable of creating their own energy from sunlight and water. Forgotten with this Edge have the ability to, once per chapter, recover all lost health levels by spending a full 24 hours in their Xenoform with access to sunlight and water.

Tell: Evolutionary Edges come with an equally variable drawback. Every Countless who manifests an Edge has a related animalistic feature. The Tasmanian Tiger’s Natural Weapon also gives her noticeably unusual teeth. Desmond Draculae’s Enhanced Sense turns his nose up, giving his face a piggish appearance. While the features that animal Ancestors inherit can be problematic, this Tell is often more troubling for near-human Ancestors. Outcomes range from comical (being mistaken for Bigfoot), to tragic (being targeted by bigotted humans).

Adaptation: Survivalist

As the last will and testament of their species, each Ancestor inherits the instincts and strategies of every member of their species. Ancestors may make Survival checks to navigate the fundamentally irrational landscapes of the Shadow Biosphere and the Shadowlands. Ancestors add their Remembrance score to Survival rolls and cannot botch Survival checks.

Ancestor Challenge: In Memoriam

Ancestors are the unfulfilled Dreams of their kind. These Dreams can be as simple or complex as the player believes the character's species was capable of, and most of them are simply roleplay fodder. The one Dream that unites all ancestors is the need to be remembered. Encountering a misconception or other untruth about their species triggers Anthropic Hostility.

Explorer Species Traits

Origin Mutation: The Void
Ignore the negative effects of Zero/Microgravity. Treat Low Gravity as the 1G Condition. Triple the number of rounds an Explorer can be exposed to Dangerously Low Pressure and Anaerobic Conditions before they begin taking damage.

Tell: Explorers lack the gross muscle mass to comfortably exist on the Surface. Treat the 1G Condition as Heavy Gravity, Heavy Gravity and Dangerous Gravity.

Utility Mutation: Maw of Níðhöggr
As the hosts of Zed-infused decomposers, the Explorers' digestive system is unique among the Countless. By vomiting digestive media onto a fresh corpse Explorers can quickly break down and integrate their meal's complex matter, healing themselves of one point of Holographic damage (if the corpse is a Chimera) or lethal damage (if the corpse is part of Surface Reality and the Explorer is in Xenoform) per hour spent using the Maw. At a maximum this ability allows the Explorer to recover as many health levels as the corpse had in life. While eating in this way the Explorer is helpless. Retracting the Maw takes a full minute.

This ability may be used on living creatures. Living beings resist attempts to be eaten if not restrained somehow. Being witnessed using the Maw by unmodified humans (including victims) provokes both Anthropic Hostility.

Tell: It is an underappreciated fact of life in space that bacteria and other microorganisms thrive in microgravity. Before they were claimed by Harmony, the Explorers' bodies played host to decomposers. Explorers have trouble restraining the decomposition of their human forms. Because of this, Explorers impart a certain… odor… to their hosts that humans, animals, and other inhumans find repulsive.

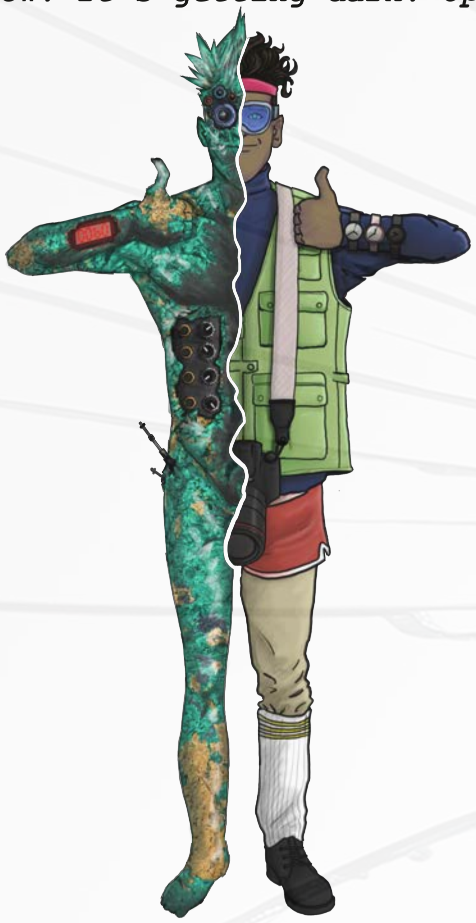
Challenge: Sensory and Autonomic Neuropathy
Though Explorers' Creation returned them to life their Joining leaves the host's PNS severely damaged. Every Explorer lacks the capacity to feel or perceive pain. At first blush this seems like a benefit, but as the Explorers adjust to life on the Surface they inevitably render parts of themselves nonfunctional without realizing it. They partly compensate for this through their ability to recover from any injury, given enough time and biological matter to feed from, but this challenge is especially problematic in situations where damage is expected (such as combat).

Players treat health levels and damage as hidden stats. The Storyteller keeps track of Explorer's health, and does not reveal the raw values to the player. The Storyteller may reveal damage penalties to the player for ease of play. If the player wants to know their character's rough condition the Explorer must spend a round assessing their condition by making a Medicine check.

Oppies

[Fire Demons, 'Niks, the Frozen Flames, Rovers (derogatory)]

My battery is low. It's getting dark.—Opportunity Rover



The Explorers aren't alone...

... in being sent screaming into the Heavens by humans. Taking the lessons learned from the genesis of the Explorers, human scientists continue to send probes innumerable into every Subspatial Realm. These, however, carried payloads of advanced machinery. Inert matter was simply more resistant to Subspace's Tidal influences.

In some ways Glamour and ZPE act very similarly. Both gather and clot around things that attract human attention. One of the earliest robotic explorers, Sputnik, acted like a lens for these energies—collecting and focusing humans' the curiosity, wonder, and fear as it passed above them. Over the course of its nearly three months in orbit, that Glamour condensed and the first Oppies fell to the Surface.

Oppies are the subjects of intense debate and study. While very few, if any, of the Oppies generated by Sputnik avoided falling to Banality, the Clade is sustained by periodic population explosions. Any time a space probe's mission captures humans' imagination a few dozen new Oppies might be born. As the Internet mourned the Opportunity rover's "death" in a Martian dust-storm the hot Glamour of humans' curiosity and sorrow birthed dozens of new Oppies. When these new children fell to Earth, the relatively small Clade finally came to the Countless' and Inanimaes' attention. For reasons not entirely understood, long-lived space probes are more likely than new missions to create Oppies.

The Slow Empires

... are confounded by the birth of this Clade. A maelstrom of hope and terror washes over the Inanimae Empires. Oppies defy the traditional politics and loyalties of the Inanimae: born from Sky, Flames, and Stones (and perhaps even Sparks), neither purely the product of mortal Craft nor the children of pristine Glade. Oppies could at last bring the Empires' wars to a conclusion. The forces who profit by the Glome occupation of the Empire of Flames have the most to lose if these bastard children choose to claim their birthright. Both sides on the War of Making see the threat that Inanimae conceived by human effort and whose midwives were were the natural fury of re-entry could pose to the "real" divide between Kroft and Glade. Even the more persistent Lycians have taken note the usurpers cutting into what have always been "their" Dreams, born from

Accounts Conflict:
The Union and Oppies

Does the Technocratic Union know that their early experiments with spaceflight gave birth to the explorer species of forgotten? On the one hand, it's entirely reasonable that the technocrats assumed that terminated was terminated. On the other hand, Mage paranoia puts Vampire paranoia to shame, so maybe they continued to observe their specimen beyond the planned end of the mission.

high abstractions.

Without a clear consensus on how to address these new Inanimae the Slow Empires have officially adopted a "wait and hope it takes care of itself" approach. Inanimae sympathetic to (or even just curious about) Oppies tend to be those who were already on the outskirts of acceptable society. Sparks and Mannikins, never really fitting in to the Inanimae world, made the first overtures to the newcomers. They've observed that Oppies instinctively craft Facades, something that the Lycians seem constitutionally incapable of learning even the basics of. While the thing that gives them their Glamour is the product of human hands, the shooting stars that attend their births are nominally natural occurrences. This leaves the Oppies who choose to live among Inanimae in an awkward place—not wholly Glome or Solomind; not Kroft nor Glade, their loyalties will always be in question. Only time will reveal the Dreaming's plan (if there is one) for the Oppies.

Naming Conventions

Most oppies take their names from their Anchors–either the mission name or the more common popular name. Even though there are no less than six known Junos active on the Surface, Oppies always know which specific individual people mean when they talk about her. They are perplexed by others' inability to tell Oppy siblings (those born from the same Anchor) apart.

Unleashing

Oppies unleashing is accompanied by extreme heat or cold, the sensation of traveling at profane speeds, or briefly being on the surface of a distant and barren alien world. Observers are overwhelmed by intense curiosity and aching loneliness.

Facade

Constructed from materials available at their birthplaces (Oppies think of these places as "Impacts"), one would expect an Oppy's Facade to be as unconvincing as any other Inanimae's. Crashing to the Surface shatters, melts, and fuses whatever was at the Impact before. Unlike Lycians (who cannot craft Facades) and other Inanimae (who intentionally craft their Facades), Oppies form their disguises naturally and effortlessly. Their very first action, post Impact, is to draw the pulverized, shattered, melted, and burning matter leftover from the accident of their birth and shape them into the semblance of a human. Then a thin layer of the

Glamour that created them creates the illusion of that stone, metal, and fire being alive.

Oppy Facades are nearly perfect facsimiles of the human body. Only the very best doll face-makers approach this mastery, and their skill is that of an artist—the idea that Oppies were born with a Facade and they don't get any choice in its apperance (kind of like meat) is incomprehensible to the way most Inanimae's way of thinking.

Dreamform

Oppies' Dreamforms are similar to slimmed down and more human-like Silicates'. While Silicates in Xenoform appear to be an organic core encased within layers of body armor or other protective gear, Oppies' Dreamforms show them to be humanoid inorganic material—metals, ices, light, and flame. Telescopes, radios, drill probes, and any number of exotic scientific instruments are incorporated into their Dreamform.

Oppies' Dreamforms are almost as varied as the Silicates. A Revealed Oppy's skin, eyes, hair (and sometimes even their clothes) retain their humanoid silhouette, but are obviously whatever material(s) were available at the Oppy's Impact. Whatever suites and equipment the Oppy has are fully manifest in Xenoform.

Stereotypes

Yutu Sasei, the Jade Rabbit, consults her notes:

Humans
They could go so far. They just need the right inspiration.

Kites
What even is this?

Silicates
Excellent engineering. More advanced than any other Visitors so far catalogued. While integrating every new piece of technology they come up with into their bodies results a messy aesthetic, there's something to be admired about their generalism.

Forgotten
They're some sort of biological weapon, right? Nothing to worry about.

Glomes & Solominds
Awfully arrogant of them to just assume we were born to solve their problems.

Hsien
Pretty shoddy work if you ask me.

Affinity: Skeptical Mind

(Oppies do not have an affinity Realm. Instead they may learn Inanimae and meat Realms as well as Countless Theories. Oppies may not learn the fifth dot of any Theory or Realm.)

Cladewide Traits

Origin: The Light of Science
Oppies can utilize any technology, including xenotech created by the Countless and supertech created by other inhumans. Oppies suffer no untrained restriction on any roll related to examining, using, or repairing technology.
Tell: The hologram that conceals Oppies' Dreamforms has a very short range. Matter

removed from their bodies quickly reverts to whatever it really was. To avoid suspicion, Oppies rely on mundane clothes and accessories whenever possible. Unavoidably, when Oppies suffer any amount of lethal or aggravated damage they “bleed” what they’re truly made of.

Refinement: Instrument Suite

Choose one:

Comm Suite

One half of a tandem, these machines were designed to relay data collected by their companion to ground control teams on Earth. Oppies with this suite are capable of transmitting and receiving messages across vast distances. Sending a message to another changeling is free as long as the Oppy has a standing relationship with them. Sending messages to unknown changelings or mortals costs a point of Zed.

On the recipient’s end contact is established through the nearest appropriate telecom device (smartphones, computers, tvs, radios, ect) even if it is off, has no electricity, or is not connected to a network.

Materials Suite

These Oppies are equipped for the dirty work of collecting and analysing samples. This array of tools allows these Oppies to slowly collect, store, and refine chimerical materials into useful components. These products can be used for making repairs to other things. Oppies with this suite spend a point of Zed to restore a point of hardness to any inorganic object.

Sensor Suite

When others imagine an Oppy they most often imagine one this suite. Equipped with technology dedicated to observing the universe these Oppies receive two free Holographic dots of Perception, even if that puts them over the usual limits for humans.

Adaptation: Technical Wonder

Choose a knowledge—the Oppy gets two bonus dots in that trait, even if it takes them over the human maximum of 5 dots, and can never botch a roll that utilizes that trait. The chosen trait always reflects the Oppy’s mission in Subspace.

Challenge: K'nar'st’s Curse

Born from a Breakthrough from Subspace to the Waking World, Oppies are Inanimae without an Anchor. Once an Oppy’s body takes fatal damage they are reduced to their Dreamform and will quickly Calcify if they are unable to attune to another Anchor. Oppies have no Empire in the Dreaming.

Challenge: Outsider Looking In

Oppies are fundamentally incapable of grasping social cues. Any time an Oppy has to make a social check to fit in with non-machine life they automatically botch. Some Oppies will dedicate significant resources (often in the form of a chimerical companion or other form of "interpreter") to overcome this challenge. Others simply shrug and carry on, content that their real friends will be gracious.

Allegiance

The First Wave

We can't deter people fleeing for their lives. They will come. The choice we have is how well we manage their arrival, and how humanely.

-António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres

The First Wave was a terrible time for the Countless. The Joining was an act of desperation with no guarantee of success. Dross harvesting operations hadn't yet been established, and Zed was precious. Survival on the Surface was never assured. Yet in one very specific way it was idyllic—There was no strife between Countless. The needs of adaptation and survival consumed every effort and the Joined didn't have time to consider the sort of higher questions that inevitably give rise to internecine fighting. The needs of survival were quickly codified into the first Mission Objectives: Refuge, Survival Training, and Cultivation.

Countless pioneers changed all that. The Joining was rapidly perfected and adopted by all. The Surface wasn't as Dross-rich as Subspace but establishing productive Dross-harvesting operations wasn't as difficult as expected. Subsequent Waves of refugees found adaptation and survival to be problems with readymade solutions. As is always the case with human (and partially-human) creatures, political currents soon swirled just under the surface of society. With the benefit of hindsight, today's Countless take it as inevitable that the Allegiances would have emerged. The two major Allegiances address the question of long-term survival and propagation of the Countless in very different ways.

Mission Critical Objectives

Refuge
Provide Hosts to new arrivals.

Survival Training
Teach Surface survival skills to newly Implanted.

Exploitation
Indentify and exploit Zed through whatever means necessary.

The Prophets of Harmony

The Prophets of Harmony preach a kind of techno-religious doctrine. Beyond the Irradiated Surface there exists a paradise—the natural state of all existence which abhors the Anthropic Singularity and its attendant Holographic Universe. The Prophets feel that the Joining was less a merging of two coequal beings and more as a Countless becoming Irradiated as a sort of inoculation against fatal Radiation poisoning. These Countless think that the Earthbinding was a mistake; one which must be corrected. Ultimately, the

Prophets want to restore Harmony by destroying the Surface and returning to their original state as Unbound. The Prophets embrace Harmonic Truth as the vehicle of their restoration.

Objectives

Decontamination
Wipe the stain of the Tidal Event from Subspace.

Abatement
Neuter the source of the Tidal Event.

Paradise
Return to the Black from whence we were taken.

The Symbiosis Collective

The Symbiosis Collective takes another approach. They see life as a Malthusian progression of states. The Countless were once a part of Harmony, but became singular through exposure to Anthropic Radiation. Those new beings gave birth to the proto-Clades, which themselves evolved into the Species of Earthbound Countless we're now familiar with. Though it nearly wiped them out, the Tidal Event prompted the Countless to become Joined, evolving yet again. The Symbiosis Collective proposes that the current moment is unique in Countless history—for the first time the Countless have the knowledge and opportunity to direct their next evolutionary step. Instead of trying to turn the wheel of progress backward, as the Prophets seek to do, the Countless should try to limit the harm the next turn can do.

All licensed chirurgeons work directly for either the Symbiosis Collective or the Prophets of Harmony and "tag" Hosts after Implantation so that they may be tracked, monitored for the early signs of Emergence, and promptly retrieved once the Earthbinding is complete. When everything goes according to plan, newly Emerged have no choice in their Allegiance, bound instead to choices their former self made. Everything does not always go as planned. Tags are defective, Hosts (perhaps motivated by the nascent Countless within) slip beyond their keepers' reach, and chirurgeons motivated by minority Allegiance or simple greed perform secret Joinings. Countless Emerging from such procedures declare their own Allegiance and must take responsibility for their decisions.

Objectives

Adapt or Die
Humans caused the Tidal Event; our complacency made us vulnerable to it.

Through Unity; Harmony
The Joining brought us closer to Humanity.
We must bring Humanity closer to us.

Xeno/Terra-forming
Make Earth pleasing to us.
Make Subspace pleasing to us.

Minority Allegiance

Derisively called "going native", some Countless declare minority Allegiance. Minority Countless are ostracized by citizens of both major factions. This creates a situation where minority Countless usually live surrounded by Changelings, never really understood or trusted, and completely isolated from other Countless.

On a world as divorced from Harmonic

Truth as the Earth minority allegiances are potentially unlimited. Some examples include: Concordia, the Nunnehi Nations, the Menehune, the Pacific Alliance of Free Dreams, the Hsien, the Technocratic Union, ect.

Zero Point Energy, Harmonic Truth, and You

The Countless are very new to Changeling life. It is not currently known if Countless reincarnate the way (some) other Changelings do. Though it has been half a century since the first Joining, Countless are still very much the new players in the World of Darkness' ensemble cast. As more and more Countless find or create inroads to Subspace, they are having to confront the uncomfortable truth that their relationship to Subspace, Zed, Harmonic Truth, and even themselves is not the same as it was before the Tidal Event.

Joined Countless cannot consume raw Dross the way they could before the Earthbinding. Though they can digest it and derive ZPE from the Dross, they also take in toxic Harmonic Truth as a contaminant. Players note Truth levels starting on the right side of the Ego point track traveling left. When a Countless' Harmonic contamination encounters a point of Willpower, it removes the Will point from the Countless' pool permenantly. When a character's temporary Ego pool is completely consumed by the Truth, their temporary points of Harmonic Truth manifest as a permanent point of Imblance, which is recorded starting on the right-hand side of the permanent Ego track and behaves similarly to the temporary points when it reaches a purchased Ego dot. When ten temporary points of Truth "upgrade" to an Imbalance the temporary track returns to zero temporary points of Truth and Willpower. A character who reaches 10 dots of Imbalance immediately attempts to rejoin Harmony by leaving the Holographic Universe for the Black (this is to say they compulsively attempt to reach the Last Horizon and become a Storyteller character).

One would think that once this tendency to be overcome by Subspace's malignancy were well known the Countless would simply shrug and make new homes on the Surface the way other Changelings have. While Harmonic Truth threatens to obliterate the Countless' sense of self (and self-preservation), Anthropic Radiation exposure is fatal. When an Earthbound Countless is exposed to Radiation, they gain a Rad point (recorded at the right side traveling left, on the temporary Zed track). As with Harmonic Truth, Rads eliminate any points of Zed they encounter as the Countless becomes more Irradiated. When a Countless reaches their tenth Rad point, their temporary Zed track reverts to no points of Zed or Radiation and they gain a permanent point of Irradiation (again, starting on the right side of the permanent Zed track). As they become more Irradiated, they lose permanent points of Zed and the associated Mutations they gained with them. Due to the loss of Mutations, terminal Irradiation is often easy to spot. Other Countless will avoid Radiation victims for fear of "catching it". Indeed, the presence of highly Irradiated Countless makes Formulae and Devices less likely to work, and Irradiated Countless have a tendency to inspire self-directed Anthropic Radiation in others.

When a Countless reaches their tenth permanent dot of Irradiation, their Implanted Countless dies. The shock of this isn't always fatal to the Host, and those who survive live on as normal humans—forever cut off from the all but the most Superficial elements of the Holographic Universe. The spark that made them compatible with the Countless Dream expires with their Countless, and these new Normals usually live out completely uninspired and unremarkable lives.

Anathema, Antithesis, and Anthropic Hostility

The Countless experience of Banality (Anthropic Radiation) is in many ways similar to other changelings. Antithesis, for example, is unmodified for Countless. During character creation Countless players and Storytellers need to create their characters' Anathema and should be aware of the slightly different way Triggers are handled.

Anathema

Cold Iron is Anathema to Concordians, causing them intense pain and suppressing the Chimerical self. The Countless are not afflicted with the same curse. Instead, Countless players assign their characters' Anathema. These mundane substances are so destructive to the Dream that drives your Countless that they have a similar effect to Cold Iron exposure on changelings. A character's Anathema should be about as present in the environment as Cold Iron. The Storyteller is the final arbiter of what is an appropriate Anathema but as a general rule, if an Anathema is so rare as to not be a concern for an entire chapter it isn't an appropriate Anathema. Anathema that are so common that they become a focus of the chronicle are inappropriate for normal Anathema and are addressed by the flaw Ubiquitous Anathema (see **Merits and Flaws** under **Contrivances**).

Triggers: Anthropic Hostility and Self-Directed Hostility

The Countless experience Triggers similarly to other changelings, though what Triggers them and how they think of the experience is slightly different. To the Countless, "Triggers" are "Radiation exposure". Whether that Radiation is produced by human observers or the human half of a Countless is relevant.

"Normal", or external, Anthropic Hostility is Radiation produced when humans instinctively reject evidence of the Holographic Universe. Self-directed Hostility is viewed as the result of an imperfect Joining, and brings negative social consequences to both Countless who admit they experience it and the chirurgeon who performed their implantation. Self-directed Hostility is produced by Countless who, themselves, reject the Holographic Universe.

Universal Anthropic Hostility Triggers

- Anathema Grounding (invoking the Autumn) to resist a Formula or other Holographic effect. [See sidebar under "The Holographic Principle"]
- Failing an Abduction check.
- Willfully destroying pre-Tidal Event relics.
- Killing a Countless' Host.
- Acting counter to the Countless' Critical Objectives or your Allegience's Mission Objectives.

Expressions of skepticism toward obvious display of Xenotechnological power.

Motion

Society attacks early, when the individual is helpless.

— B.F. Skinner

Clade, Caste, and Legacy all describe the ways a Countless character experiences Holographic Reality. In place of Seeming, Motion determines how your character copes with the harsh reality of life as an Earthbound Countless. The three "normal" Motions (Eccentric, Resonant, and Prograde) all have a Crisis and a Reflex. Retrograde Motion is an aberration; the unintended product of imperfect Implantation techniques. Unethical Chirurgeons engage in forbidden studies on Retrogrades to help them correct these flaws in the science.

Crisis describes a drive that, if unheeded, causes the Joined's human half to generate Radiation. The Joined capacity for self-directed Radiation (usually called Self-Hostility) is an unexpected inconvenience of the Joined condition, and Countless society gracefully ignores episodes of Self-Hostility. Where Crises are provoked by the subconscious influence of a Countless' human host, Motions' Reflexes are instincts that help them cope with their new, highly Irradiated, environments.

Eccentric

The dynamos of the Countless, Eccentrics push society in new and unexpected directions. Less resilient and responsible than the other Motions, Eccentrics are tempestuous and their efforts have the most noticeable effects on others. This isn't to say that Eccentrics are incapable of planning or subtlety. Rather that the outcomes of their actions (whether covert or overt) are always disruptive and revolutionary.

Crisis: Eccentrics trigger Self-Hostility when they fail to convince someone to abandon their routines in favor of the unknown.

Reflex: Eccentrics can opt to take a point of the Truth instead of a point of Radiation on a failed Anthropic Hostility check.

Resonant

Resonants form the backbone of Countless society. Less prone to outbursts than Eccentrics and more flexible than Progrades, these Countless are tirelessly greasing the wheels (both metaphorically and literally) of any crew they are a part of. Resonants clear obstacles away and create the conditions in which others thrive. Resonants tend to define the self by how useful one is to others. This habit can easily trap Resonants in cycles that extinguish the already fragile Countless sense of self.

Crisis: Resonants trigger Self-Hostility when they fail to provide a necessity for someone in their crew.

Reflex: Resonants can opt to become Retrogrades to avoid taking a point of Harmonic Truth.

Prograde

The movers and shakers of the Countless political scene, Progrades make up the informal thought-police of their Allegiance. Progrades work tirelessly to “encourage” other Countless to maintain orthodoxy. Those closest to a Prograde often wonder if their enthusiasm for dogma and best practices is an act to distract from some hidden flaw or insecurity.

Crisis: Progrades provoke Self-Hostility when they fail to get someone to adhere to their Mission Objectives.

Reflex: Progrades can opt to become Retrogrades to avoid taking a point of Radiation on a failed Anthropic Hostility check.

Retrograde

When a Joined being’s Countless retreats into Dormancy they are said to be Retrograde, or moving against the “natural” direction of their lives. Refer to the Mists Chart [C20 pg. 269] to determine the minimum length of your character’s retrograde motion. Refer to your character’s Human Legacy [see below] to determine the condition that will trigger your character’s Emergence into the Holographic Universe.

While the Retrograde Motion is viewed generally as something of a weakness by the Countless, it is also a powerful defense against Radiation. While Retrograde Countless do not experience Crises or accumulate externally generated Radiation.

Crisis: None

Reflex: At their Re-emergence, a Retrograde’s player can assign a new Motion.

Legacies

> *I am not a little bit of many things; but I am the sufficient representation of many things. I am not an incompletion of all these races; but I am a masterpiece of the prolific. I am an entirety, I am not a lack of anything; rather I am a whole of many things.*
>
> *—C. JoyBell C.*

In place of Seelie and Unseelie Legacies, Joined have a Countless Caste and a Human Legacy. Allegiance often (but not always) determines whether they favor their Caste or their Legacy. A slim majority of the Prophets of Harmony embrace their Caste, while the Collectivists who admit that their Inhuman Caste has any effect on their personality are truly rare. Those who are out of step with their Allegiance (that is, Prophets who are motivated by their Human Legacy and Symbiotes who focus on their Caste) put the twist of their faction's propeganda on that aspect of their personality. Humanist Prophets see the Countless reclaiming their homes in Subspace as an imperative that protects humanity from further alien contamination while Caste focused Collectivists work to turn both Biospheric Space and Subspace into havens for the Joined, regardless of whether or not humanity could withstand the Biosphere being so drastically altered.

Caste

Castes provide the Joined with their Missions and Ego Failure conditions. Missions describe scenarios that reinforce the Countless' role in society and expresses their true purpose. Once per session, completing their Mission restores all of a Countless' spent Will (except those Ego points currently filled with Truth). Ego Failures are the opposite of Missions and are so damaging to the Countless' idea of themself that they prevent a Countless from regaining Will through completing their Mission.

Boffin

Before the Tidal Event the Countless relied on Boffins to make sense of the world. If anything, the Earthbinding made this caste even more indispensable. Boffins have focused on studying the Joined condition; what the limitations and requirements of their new bodies are and how to best accommodate these as they begin to return to Subspace. Most Earthbound Dross harvesting and processing operations are overseen (if not staffed) by Boffin crews.

Mission: Any time a Boffin is instrumental in reclaiming lost territory in Subspace they regain spent Will.

I Don't Belong Here!: A boffin who didn't either spend time in Subspace or harvest any Dross (purifying it isn't required) last session may not regain Will this session.

Chirurgeon

Chirurgeons took the wreckage of the Tidal Event and pioneered the Earthbinding. Myriad Abduction and Implantation techniques have developed since then, each with their own distinct merits and drawbacks. Their political power has waned somewhat between the

Tidal Event and modern nights. Due to the resources required to practice their arts, many Chirurgeons find themselves bound to the patronage of the Symbiosis Commission or the Prophets. The two major Allegiances treat their Chirurgeons well, but are quick to revoke the license of any who allow newly Implanted Countless to avoid conscription.

Mission: Chirurgeons regain Willpower whenever someone would have died but for the Chirurgeon's help.

I Can't Work Under These Conditions!: Chirurgeons require extremely precise and expensive equipment to perform their miracles. If a Chirurgeon loses the patronage of one of the two major factions and does not have at least 4 dots of Resources, they may not regain Willpower until one of those conditions is met.

Conscript

Some Countless were created to lead and others to follow. Fortunately, you are the latter. Your responsibilities do not include understanding or anticipating "big picture" things. You're given a goal and all that matters is giving it your all.

Mission: Whenever a Conscript follows a plan laid out by someone else to completion they regain Will. (The plan doesn't need to be successful as long as the failure wasn't due to the Conscript's mistake or shortcoming.)

I Was Just Following Orders!: A Conscript who refused to follow a command from someone they recognize as more important than themself in the last session may not regain Ego during the current session.

Functionary

Some Joined were born to follow and others to lead. Fortunately, yours is the latter. You leave sweating and dying on the ground to others. You make the decisions that move the great masses of the people. It is by your command that others act.

Mission: Whenever a Functionary's plan is followed, regardless of success, the functionary regains Will.

Never Contradict Me In Front Of The Crew!: A Functionary who lost face (including from especially ignoble failures) in front of others during the last session may not regain Willpower during the current session.

Innovator (Sootie)

Before the Earthbinding Sooties were created to mass-produce xenotech. Often capable of only very simple intelligence, Sooties were rarely employed in creative work. These Countless lived (and died) building the Empires' capital ships and clearing Subspatial hazards before they could threaten trade routes or settlements.

Humans say that necessity is the mother of invention, and Earthbound Sooties made this their new motto. The Irradiation of Subspace and the peculiarities of Joined existence necessitates incredible innovation to complete previously simple tasks, and these mistreated laborers have risen to the occasion. Modern nights see Sooties overrepresented in engineering and other applied science jobs.

Most Innovators (as they now style themselves) know their worth, but more traditional (or exploitative and intolerant) upper Caste Countless refuse to acknowledge the Sooties' recently improved standing. Much to "their betters'" chagrin Innovators frequently form unions and crews with casteless. Though the success of any individual initiative taken by the lower Caste unions varies, that they've forced any progress at all on the Countless speaks to their power.

Mission: Innovators regain Willpower when something they built (whether a physical device or a social construct like a union or a crew) turns out to be just the thing at a crucial moment.

At Least Make It Challenging!: Who didn't grow from working on a puzzle or difficult problem (solving it isn't necessary) in the last session may not regain Will in the current session.

Quartermaster

Logistics experts par excellence, Quartermasters could overrule decisions made by any other Caste in Subspace simply by making sure their requests "got lost". This power wasn't unlimited, but was a needed check on the higher castes. Due to the relative scarcity of raw materials (Dross) on the Surface, effective Earthbound Quartermasters find their latitude nearly limitless.

Mission: Whenever a Quartermaster produces exactly the right material good or service from their hoard at exactly the right time, regain Willpower.

They Might Have It!: If a Quartermaster did not take the opportunity to shop or bargain for something during the last session they may not regain Will during the current session.

Roustabout

The lives of Roustabouts before the Earthbinding were dreary, tedious, and short. Created to fulfill tedious and dangerous tasks, these creatures were expendable and unremarkable. Less care was taken in their creation than even the Innovators, and many Roustabouts' Holographic bodies are misshapen and highly Irradiated, further contributing to their poor status among the Countless.

The Earthbinding forced strange ideas about "equality" and "equity" into the Joined weltanschauung. While some Joined have learned to put aside their distaste for the Casteless long enough to work with them on some mutual goal, most find the Roustabouts' rabble rousing repulsive. Roustabouts' opinion on the Innovators' project to reform other Countless vary, but most find the Unions' mission hopelessly romantic or obnoxious. The Casteless would prefer to simply not with Countless who refuse to acknowledge their validity as sentient life, but modern nights demand compromise and, unfortunately for the Roustabouts, their tenuous position means that they are often the ones who must make the lion's share of the concessions.

Mission: Whenever a Roustabout solves a problem through straightforward hard work they regain Will.

Which One Is The Salad Fork?: The casteless offend the delicate sensibilities of their betters. A roustabout who didn't offend "their betters" in the last session may not regain Willpower in the current game session.

Visionary

As the Caste originally devoted to creating the Countless' technology and culture, Visionaries have been hardest hit by the Earthbinding. Thousands of years of Countless culture was lost in the Tidal Event. Most, if not all, of what was lost were the Visionaries' creations.

Joined Visionaries live much like they did before the Tidal Event. They work to create an aesthetic that speaks to the Holographic Universe they find themselves in. Most, particularly among the Prophets, seek Subspatial relics to help them rebuild what was lost. Prograde Visionaries are some of the most hardline fundamentalists among the Countless, forcing pre-Earthbinding norms on Joined civilization.

A minority of Visionaries seek to embody the value of progress. They retain their Caste's bitterness about the genocide —making art and other creations that reflect the brutality of the Tidal Event. Of all the upper Castes, progressive Visionaries are the likeliest to embrace the struggle of the lower Castes, but their approach often reflects their privilege, othering and fetishizing their ersatz friends.

Mission: Visionaries regain Will whenever they create a work (either material or abstract) that achieves widespread acclaim.

I’m Bored!: Visionaries are obsessed with finding inspiration. If a Visionary didn’t indulge in a thrilling or adventurous new experience during the last game session they may not recover Willpower this session.

Human Legacy

Humans generate Radiation by existing. Some generate more than others, and in rare cases humans are even capable of consciously channeling it. A very few special humans Radiate so little that they make suitable Hosts for the Countless. Careful cultivation and study of Unmodified Low-Emitters revealed that they can even intermittently perceive Holographic Reality. The science of Abduction grew from this field, and Abducted humans and can be trained to monitor Zed reactions, making them a valuable commodity beyond their ability to become Hosts.

Every human Legacy includes an Emergence. Emergences describe situations and achievements that cause a Joined’s human self to experience a sort

Epiphany and Emergence

The one method that the all Countless can use to create Zed from Humans, Rapture, is the same as that used by indigenous changelings with one modification: Rapture's creative effort must fall under the Countless's Emergence condition. A cryptologists’ Rapture, then, might focus on conducting a long-term study of a previously unknown colony of Chimera, producing an academic paper on Vampire vivisection, or cataloging the insights provided by becoming close friends with a Thought-Crafter. Repeatedly studying the same specimen requires increasingly granular attention (increasing the difficulty of the check).

Though it is widely thought impossible for the human half of a Countless to generate enough Zed to exceed the implanted Countless’ hunger, many things thought “impossible” are simply not done but possible. The Countless capability to experience Rapture implies that they may be viable targets for other Epiphanies, including Rhapsody, if one were capable of accurately discerning the victim’s Emergence.

of epiphany about the true nature of reality. As one might expect, a Joined's first Emergence follows Implantation. First Wave Chirurgeons discovered that First Emergence can be forced by exposing the new Joined to pure Zero Point Energy. It wasn't until much later that Forced Emergences were shown to interrupt the Host's healing process and integration of the Implantation was harmed. Though so-called "c-section" Countless are less likely to be lost during the (typically) long First Dormancy following Implantation, their long-term viability is compromised by a greater sensitivity to Radiation. Current best-practices for the Joining advise the attending Chirurgeon to implant a tracking device and leave newly Implanted Hosts to recover and achieve First Emergence in the wild.

The Countless do not harvest Zed from humans the way other changelings do. Instead they draw it from their environment. They can, however, inspire their human Hosts to connect with Subspace, forming a unique and transitory Breakthrough. The Countless' Human Legacy provides their equivalent to Revelry.

Cryptologist

The World of Darkness is a strange place, populated by things the sheep pretend never existed. You are not a sheep. You're plugged in and you're *this close* to blowing the rotten thing wide open. You just need one more piece of the puzzle to make sense of it all.

Emergence: Developing a deep understanding of or relationship with a new chimera, Wraith, Vampire, or other obvious aspect of the World of Darkness' supernatural ecosystem awakens the Cryptologist's dormant Countless.

Revelry: Once per chapter a cryptologist can recover all spent Zed by revealing the secrets of another Inhuman creature to humans.

Homesteader

Where Voyagers blaze new trails Homesteaders often follow. The challenge of creating a comfortable life in an unreliable or hazardous environment drives Homesteaders to study survivalism, electrical engineering, plumbing, geology, animal husbandry, and dozens of other eclectic topics.

Emergence: The Countless within a Homesteader Emerges at the completion of a project that turns a discrete area of wilderness into a livable settlement.

Revelry: Homesteaders achieve Revelry by building something new (such as a solar array or a septic tank) or otherwise upgrading some extant feature of their home.

Humanist

You feel that if the world had more people like you we'd be able to solve all the world's problems. The irony of this is that you love people who are unlike you. Strangers are simply fascinating. People find the intensity of your interest unnerving, but you love to experience novel ways of being human.

Emergence: Dormant Countless within Cosmopolitans awaken when they are immersed in a completely new (and probably to them, strange) culture.

Revelry: The Cosmopolitans of the World of Darkness revel in the strangenesses all around them. Once per chapter, a cosmopolitan recovers all spent Zed when they observe another type of inhuman's strange social rituals.

Naturalist

Naturalists find wonder in appreciating the natural world. Before their Joining, Naturalist Low-Emitters were camping enthusiasts, obsessive mountain climbers, and any other frivolous things that got them out of doors. After Joining, many Naturalists have become the most hard-line Prophets—believing that returning to the Countless' natural state is the obvious (and only) worthwhile goal for the Earthbound Ones.

Emergence: A Naturalist Emerges when they achieve ecstatic appreciation for their natural environment.

Revelry: Showing an appreciative human the wonder of the natural world allows a Naturalist to experience Revelry.

Tinkerer

Like a child with an expensive audio system, Tinkerers are fascinated by the inner workings of complicated things. These humans receive incredible insight from taking a functional (usually valuable) thing and disassembling it.

Emergence: Disassembling (and thereby destroying) something irreplaceable will allow the Dormant Countless spirit to Emerge.

Revelry: Tinkerers recover spent Zed when they disassemble something precious (and later experience hardship because of it).

Transhumanist

Transhumanists see the human capacity to exceed expectations. Whether making up for a perceived weakness or unlocking hidden potential, Transhumanists find inspiration in the next chapter of the human story.

Emergence: Learning something that will allow a Transhumanist to improve the way the human animal functions will prompt the Retrograde Countless to Emerge.

Revelry: Whether by biological, electronic, psychological, or other means Transhumanists experience Revelry by demonstrating to a human that it's possible for them to transcend their limitations.

Voyager

Human history is filled with people who went farther, faster, and longer than anyone before. Driven by an insatiable wanderlust, Voyagers are perhaps the easiest example of Low-Emitter compatibility with the Countless Dream.

Emergence: Experiencing a rare, difficult to reach, or undiscovered vista will allow the voyager's dormant Countless spirit to emerge from hibernation.

Revelry: Voyagers recover all spent Zed by bringing a human, who without the Voyager's help would have been incapable of experiencing the view, to an experience the human finds inspiring.

Further Permutations

Directed Evolution

With genetic modifications, beauty is no longer a goal, or even a virtue; it is a moral obligation. Do we force the healthy to live with the contagious? Do we mix the criminal with the law-abiding? Then why are the plain allowed to mingle with the fair?!

—Dr. J.S. Steinman, Bioshock

Each Countless has the ability to manifest new Mutations and Tells. These are quirks born of merging Human and Countless physiology. Tells affect a character's Surface appearance as well as their Holographic body. These are usually subtle enough to be mistaken for uncommon (but not abnormal) Human traits. A Silicate's M/MI Port, for example, could be disguised as a medical implant. Tells provide no mechanical benefit to the character but might provide narrative benefits.

Mutations are purely Holographic expressions of the Countless hidden within and do not normally function in the presence of Unmodified Humans (excepting when the Countless reveals their Xenoform). A Kite's Ialdagorth Arms represents a systematic benefit (having four extra tentacle arms) to the character, as well as marking them clearly as something other than Human to any who can perceive the greater Holographic Universe.

Each permanent point of Zero Point Energy a allows their player to (with Storyteller approval) create new Mutations. This process reflects the growing Countless spirit's influence over their Joined form growing. Silicates may also utilize their Refinement Adaptation to convert permanent Zed dots into new Mutations.

Mutation Templates

Offensive

This Mutation class provides a permanent bonus or alteration to a Countless' innate Holographic offensive capabilities. These Mutations are always Holographic, but can effect Superficial Reality if the Countless enters Xenoform.

Accuracy Bonus
This type of Mutation lowers the difficulty of a specific type of innate Holographic attack by 1. Stacks with itself up to 3 times.
Example: Infiltrator Nanite Injectors [*3]
Infiltrator class Mockingbirds are equipped with modified nanite injectors, allowing them to Abduct humans by spending a point of Zed and succeeding at a brawl attack [-3 difficulty].
Tell: Infiltrator Mockingbirds' Light Benders have trouble concealing enhanced ordinance, disguising INIs as bulky wrist-braces that are sure to draw attention.

Damage Bonus
Damage Bonus Mutations lower the difficulty of a specific type of innate Holographic attack's (such as attacks made with Ialdagorth's Arms) damage roll by 1. Stacks with itself up to 3 times.
Example: Pneumatic Hammer Arm
Originally intended to improve Oppies' capacity to take soil and rock samples,

Countless engineers repurposed this Mutation to give Oppies a little more oomph in combat [-1 difficulty brawl damage checks].
Tell: Oppies with this Mutation have unusually large hands with obvious and well-defined veins.

Deleterious Effect
Deleterious Effect Mutations impose a single secondary effect to a specific, innate, Holographic attack ability. This secondary effect can represent different side-effects of Holographic abilities, such as psychic or hypnotic abilities, natural poisons, and other narrative-focused abilities. Deleterious Effects impose a +1 difficulty penalty to one of the victim's ability checks (such as Strength or Perception checks) after a successful attack that was not completely soaked. Multiple purchases of this Mutation do not increase the penalty, but may enhance a different attack.
Example: Ialdagorth's Nematocysts
Tiny barbs and neurotoxin glands hidden in their Holographic arms allows many species of Kite to more effectively defend themselves against enemies. Successful attacks made with Ialdagorth's Arms numb their victims [+1 penalty to Dexterity checks].
Tell: Kites with this Mutation have a sort of plaque psoriasis. Their skin develops scaly, itchy, patches.

Upgrade Damage Type
This class of Offensive Mutations upgrades damage dealt by a specific type of innate Holographic attack (such as unarmed) by one step (bashing to lethal, lethal to aggravated). This Mutation, once purchased, cannot be "deactivated"—damage dealt by the weapon enhanced by this Mutation will always be stepped up. Stacks with itself up to aggravated damage.
Example: Magnetic Implant
One of the many atrocities commissioned by Digital Natives in their war against Botnet 1. Implanting rare earth magnets into their bodies gives these soldiers improved stopping power against the Mockingbird threat [upgrades Holographic bashing damage to lethal].
Tell: Magnet Implants set off metal detecters and make being near high-output radio transmiters (such as microwave ovens) uncomfortable.

Defensive

Defensive Mutations provide a permanent bonus or alteration to a Countless' innate Holographic defensive capabilities. These Mutations are always Holographic, but can effect Superficial Reality if the Countless enters Xenoform.

Conditional Dodge Bonus
Choose a condition (such as flying, swimming, unarmed, energy attacks, when the moon is out, etc). When that condition applies the Countless lowers dodge difficulty by 1. This Mutation can stack with itself up to 3 times. The Storyteller is the final arbiter of which conditions are conditional enough: Conditions that are likely to almost always be in effect (such as "while standing", "alive", or "aggressive attacks") or unjustifiable (such as "while asleep", "Holographic damage", "in Xenoform") should be disallowed.
Example: Nitori Reaction Amplification [*2]
This Mutation grows special electrosensitive cells in Abyssals' bells, granting them preternatural reflexes while in a conductive environment (such as the sea) [-2 difficulty dodge checks while submerged in conductive substances].
Tell: Countless with this Mutation always shock everyone and everything they touch. This effect doesn't deal damage

or cause electronics to malfunction, but it is strange and annoying.

Conditional Soak Bonus
As with Conditional Dodge Bonus, except applying to Soak checks.

Example: Radiodurans Organelle
The Forgotten commonly develop this Mutation. As its name suggests, this modification to their cellular structure grants the Forgotten improved resistance to radiation [-1 difficulty soak checks for mundane radiations].

Tell: The extra cellular machinery required by this Mutation hedges out some of the Countless' more usual organelles. Due to a slightly lower population of mitochondria (the powerhouse of the cell!), Countless with this Mutation are more easily winded than others. [+1 difficulty to all endurance-based checks]

Downgrade Damage
This Defensive Mutation allows the Countless to downgrade damage from a specific source (Chimerical Weapons, Werewolf Claws, Formulae) by one step (aggravated to lethal, lethal to bashing). Damage cannot be downgraded beyond bashing, but bashing attacks with secondary effects can lose their secondary to a downgrade Mutation.

Example: Error-Correcting Code
Digital Natives who spend any amount of time in Digital Subspace often innoculate themselves against the most common threats to their wellbeing: computer viruses. The Error-Correcting Refinement is the most common heuristic used for this purpose [downgrade Holographic damage from viruses and malware one step].

Tell: Error-Correcting Code impacts its users' personality in strange ways. They become obsessed with tidiness in some form: either literally becoming neat freaks, or becoming upset by things they perceive as untidy (such as irrational numbers, garish colours, or modern art).

Sensory

Sensory Mutations are almost always innate and Holographic, though blatant examples of a changeling utilizing novel sense or inhuman perception in front of Unmodified humans may trigger Anthropic Hostility.

Enhanced Perception
This type of Mutation grants the changeling a bonus to certain perception checks (smell, sight, touch, etc). Stacks with itself up to 3 times.

Example: L.A. Forge© Replacement Lenses

Chirurgeons commonly implant these devices in Joined eyes to correct perceived deficits in the human vision [-1 difficulty on visual Perception checks]. The L.A. Forge (a corporation that builds chirurgical devices and implants) jealously enforces the patent on Replacement Lenses.

Tell: Countless with this Mutation have striking eyes (similar to the Flaw "Changeling Eyes").

Novel Human Sense
Novel Human Senses include abilities like Daredevil's echolocation—uses for acute or highly trained human senses that are just this side of believable.

Example: Thylacine's Nose
Extremely common among the Forgotten, Thylacine's Mutation allows Countless to navigate via smell as well as by sight.

Tell: Countless with this Mutation are, unsurprisingly, extremely sensitive to smells. Choose one common odor (such as perfumes, home cleaners, human body odor, etc). This character is made physically uncomfortable in the presence of that smell.

Inhuman Perception

This type of Mutation grants the changeling the ability to make Perception checks that normal humans are not capable of. Its gift can range from fairly mundane (the ability to correctly identify tasteless/scentless/invisible substances) to the very strange (the ability to detect interpret over-the-air radio transmissions).

Example: Ampullae of Lorenzini
This Mutation allows Countless to make Perception checks locate and categorize sources of electrical current.
Tell: Countless with this Mutation are so staticky that fabric sticks to them and their hair refuses to lay flat.

Enhanced Movement

These Mutations improve normal human movement (walking, running, swimming, etc).

Example: Transform and Roll Out
While microscopic life has evolved wheels multiple times, macroscopic life has not. By installing retractible cybernetic wheels, Silicates get around this problem. (Double landspeed on flat surfaces.)
Tell: Silicates with this Refinement appear to have leg-braces.

Inhuman Movement
Inhuman Movement Mutations provide unusual methods of travel to the Countless (floating, climbing, sliding, swinging, scuttling).

Example: Pathfinder Bounce
This Mutation allows the Countless to inflate a cocoon of airbags around their body, making them capable of withstanding immense falls. While in their cocoon the Countless cannot actively direct their fall, and may travel very far from where they intended to land due to bouncing. Until the airbags are deflated and rearmed the Countless cannot voluntarily move. Deflating and rearming the airbags is a process that requires about an hour. [As long as Countless with this Mutation have an action available before they hit the ground, they can deploy their airbags, making falls of up to 200 meters survivable.]
Tell: Countless with this Mutation appear to be extremely overweight.

Utility

Utility Mutations imitate a Formula or other supernatural effect

Origin
Origin Mutations confer benefits related to surviving Environmental Conditions common to Subspace.

Example: Heavyworlder
The Tidal Event continues to penetrate farther into Subspace and waves of Countless fleeing the apocalypse continue to Surface. How long, Cladeologists wonder, before a forgotten Clade appears? Perhaps from a supermassive Earthlike xenoplanet? These Heavyworld Countless would downgrade all Gravity Conditions by one step and find 1G to be as awkward as humans find low-G.
Tell: Heavyworlders' Holographically enhanced musculature and bones are much more dense than they should normally be. Regardless of human appearance, Heavyworld Countless interact with the world as if they weighed more than a ton. No swimming or crossing flimsy bridges for these folks.

Dowsing, Tapping and Stabilizing Dross

One of the children came and sat in my lap. I push her off, I shout, "Get away from me!" I can see the ADAM oozing out of the corner of her mouth, thick and green. Her filthy hair hanging in her face, dirty clothes, and that dead glow in her eye... I feel... hatred, like I never felt before, in my chest. Bitter, burning fury. I can barely breathe. And suddenly, I know, it is not this child I hate.

—Dr. Brigid Tenenbaum, Bioshock

Before the Tidal Event Zero Point Energy permeated all forms of matter in Subspace. With minimal effort the Countless could tap limitless fonts of pure Zed. That world was washed away by the Tidal Event, and now Subspace is almost as barren as the Surface. What Zed reaches the Surface stagnates in fetid, Irradiated, pools and requires significant energy and engineering to decontaminate. These Superficial reserves are often not worth the effort of tapping and are depleted in mere days. Subspatial Zed sources are more

Modified Talent: Dowsing

All Countless (and indeed all humans) are capable of perceiving the obvious effects of supernatural effort. Only well-educated dowsers using a xenotech scanner can analyze the principles and energies behind the effect. Before the Tidal Event Dowsing's use was limited to scientists, certain types of engineers, and rich hobbyists interested in the minutia of Subspace. Surface life and post-Tidal Event Subspace conditions have prompted the Countless to practice this talent more widely than ever before. Data gathered from dowsing the works of other Inhumans of the World of Darkness has generated entirely novel fields of xenoscientific research. Dowsing replaces Kenning.

•○○○○ **Novice:** You know which end of your scanner to point at your target. You can reliably get readings on Holographic/chimerical entities [difficulty is the highest Radiation or Banality score present, one success needed].
••○○○ **Practiced:** You can triangulate the locations of Emergences, Undefined Fantastic Objects, and Unleashings [difficulty is highest Radiation or Banality present, three successes needed].
•••○○ **Competent:** You can interpret the faint signatures of Retrogrades and untapped Dross reserves.
••••○ **Expert:** You've become deft enough with your scanner that you can interpret the faint Zed signatures in other inhumans including Vampires, Werewolves, Mages, and Wraiths. Places where Formulae were used begin to open up their secrets to you.
••••• **Master:** Neither the Surface nor Subspace can hide anything from you for long. You've begun to build an understanding of the other Inhumans' applications of Zed.

Dowsing Difficulty Guidelines

Information Sought	Successes Required
Identifying a Formula's effect	1
Identifying Countless and Subspace Chimera	1
Identifying Formula's Art	2
Identifying Formula's Primary Theory	[8 - Number of Theories Used]
Identifying Changelings and Dreaming Chimera	2
Identifying other Inhumans	3
Determining Ambient Radiation Level	[10 - Highest Radiation Level Present]

Modifiers

Condition	Modification
Active Dross Stabilization	-3 difficulty
Active Dross Harvesting	-1 difficulty
Untapped Dross Source	Standard Difficulty
Passive Formulae, past Unleashings, and Active Cantrips	+1 difficulty
Passive Cantrips, past Formulae, Retrograde Countless	+2 difficulty
Inhumans using Powers, Changelings not using Powers, past Cantrips	+2 difficulty
Inhumans not using Powers, past uses of Inhuman Powers, Retrograde Changelings	+3 difficulty

plentiful, but harvesting efforts face different challenges.

While it is possible for Countless to experience Revelry by inspiring humans to connect with the world around them, they do not engage in Reverie, Rapture, or the other human-focused Epiphanies.

Dowsers are Countless who specialize in identifying Zed-contaminated resources. Successful dowsers are highly-sought after, and often demand incredible commission (as high as 50% of the Zed produced) for their services. Once a source of Zed is identified [Scanning check: Difficulty is the ambient Anthropic Radiation level] it must be tapped. Techniques for tapping Zed resources vary wildly: A wave of Zed falling to Earth from the Void could be tapped by constructing an array of mirrors that concentrate Zed-containing photons at a single point, while Hadean Zed trapped in uranium would need to be mined and refined, and the fruit of a Zed-contaminated tree bordering on the Shadow Biosphere would need to be harvested and cooked. The form tapping takes determines the skill check [usually Crafts or Xenoscience: difficulty is the Countless' own Irradiation level]. Total the dowsing and tapping successes to determine how much Unstable Dross is produced before the source is exhausted. For Countless in a hurry, this can be the end of the process. Unstable Dross collected from the Surface taints whoever uses it (for any purpose) with its Anthropic Radiation. Unstable Dross collected from Subspace taints its user with Harmonic Truth.

The Tapping process can be modified to produce stable Dross. Where Tapping can be compared to strip mining Stabilizing is more like refining or cooking. Compared to Tapping’s relatively straightforward process (find thing; get thing), Stabilizing is labor intensive and complex. To Stabilize tapped Dross, Countless must first have access to an elemental reactor. These are usually found in Undefined Fantastic Objects (reflected by the Condenser System), but poorer Countless have been known to build temporary on-site reactors [extended Xenoscience check; difficulty 6, minimum 10 successes]. The stabilization process requires constant monitoring and adjustment. A character stabilizing Dross must devote at least a standard 8 hour work day to monitoring and adjusting the reaction process. Countless UFO owners often use Abducted human technicians to perform this work. When abductees are stabilizing, the Countless overseer makes a Leadership roll [difficulty is the highest Anthropic Radiation level present]. If the Countless is personally doing the work of monitoring the reaction, then they make a Xenoscience roll [same difficulty]. Regardless of which method is employed, successes determine the amount of stable Dross produced. This amount cannot be greater than the amount of Unstable Dross put into the reactor. Each point takes a day to produce, but does not have any of the contaminants of Unstable Dross. If, for any reason, the technician monitoring the reaction is unable to complete their duties, any remaining unprocessed Dross is wasted in a resonance cascade. If the stabilization process is botched the reactor is damaged (temporary reactors are destroyed and must be rebuilt, UFO Condensers lose a point of capacity per point of unprocessed Dross that was lost until they are repaired). Particularly catastrophic botches (5 or more points of Dross lost at once) will subject nearby creatures to an equivalent amount of aggrevated damage, and all UFO systems take as much damage as the Condenser. On-site reactors that suffer catastrophic failures damage nearby creatures and eject them from the Surface to an appropriate and unfriendly region of Subspace.

Affinities

Affinity Realm	Clade/Species (-1 difficulty to Dowsing check)
Abyss	Abyssals
Digital Subspace	Digital Natives
Hades	Aidoneus
Shadow Biosphere	None
Void	Celestials, Explorers

Hostile Environment Technology

You may also find HEV charging stations such as this one throughout the facility. These stations, however, can only be used by qualified science personnel wearing Powered Hazardous Environment equipment, so they will be inaccessible to you during your duties.

—Holographic Assistant, Half-Life: Blue Shift

Theory and Practice

Concordians hold that the Autumn World was born from the ancient conflict between the Tuatha and Fomorians. According to this myth their Firstborn ancestors used grand Unleashings and Oaths to reshape themselves, their enemies, and ultimately the world itself. The ancient powers carved deep grooves into reality. Consequently Glamour and Nightmare flow down these grooves. Following these grooves provided modern Changelings with the their most useful tool: the Realms.

While the Countless have to live in the same world as the Kithain, like the Nunnehi, Yaksha, or Menehune, they don't share that history. For the Countless the Holographic Universe has always existed. It is a delicate locus of equilibrium where the Deep and Anthropic fields met. Subspace (and consequently the Surface) are created where waves of Deep and Anthropic Radiation meet and swirl together. The current state of dissonance, experts say, is the result of the Anthropic and Deep Fields oscillating wildly.

While Zed, Subspace, and Radiation are basically interchangeable with Glamour, the Dreaming, and Banality, there are important subtle differences. Building on the foundation that *Changeling: the Dreaming 20th Anniversary Edition* laid, what is Banal to Changelings isn't necessarily hostile to the Countless. Likewise, something that is Glamourous to Changelings doesn't have to be suffused with Zed. Changelings aren't incapable of reaching Subspace, but it isn't a natural ability. The Countless aren't restricted from accessing the Dreaming but they don't know how to do it instinctively. The paradigmatic differences are too great to be overcome without exceptional effort (or exceptional circumstances).

Consider minted Dross; this coin of the realm is extremely valuable to Concordians. Landlords (both noble and common) demand raw Dross from their tenants, and then have it minted into standard coins. Nunnehi, Menehune, and even certain outcast Kithain can't derive any value from it because the Dreams in them (of feudalism, empire, settlement, and market capitalism) are at best alien and at worst antithetical to the Dreams that birthed them.

The Dreams that birthed the Countless vary as widely as those that give rise to any other group of changelings. In the broadest possible terms, however, the Concordian Dream is one of longing for the halcyon days of a past that might not have ever existed. The Countless Dream is one that aches for a future that might not ever come to pass. There are stories and feelings and Dreams that exist on the shared margins of those two Dreams (Nockers stand out as an easy example), but these are the exceptions and not the rule.

Returning to the subject of minted Dross, it is possible to melt down Concordian coins, extract Zed-contaminated Dross from the alloy, and package that for Countless consumption. The Zed required to power the purification formula alone makes this sort of project economically unfeasible on any but the largest scales. On the flipside a Nocker trying to tap the latent Glamour in an Unstable Dross tank would have to deal with the undiluted vacuum energy (which might be strikingly similar to Nightmare Fuel for the Nocker) before they could safely use it to power a Cantrip.

The topic of “magic” is probably where the Countless and other Changelings differ most. Changelings frame their use of Cantrips as "magic". On the other hand, the Countless create Formulae from their understanding of Practice (Arts) and Theory (Realms). As far as the Countless are concerned, a Formula works because of science that Humans haven’t yet discovered. A Pooka explaining how mooning the jumbotron allows them to cast Holly Strike would be met with complete incomprehension from a Countless who might cast exactly the same Cantrip by pointing their High-Guard Force Lance and squeezing the trigger.

While the nomenclature differs, the Countless understanding of certain Theories (Space/Scene and Temporal/Time) is similar to other Changelings’ Realms. Sapiological Theory developed after the Countless came to the Surface, as they had no compelling reason to study Biospheric Space before then. Fermion Sculpting is an ancient and well-developed Theory that the Countless use to understand matter itself. Field Theory describes their relationship with the sundry forces that give rise to the Holographic Universe itself. All Countless except the Ancestors replace the Realms of the Fae with the Theories of the Countless.

Fundamental Theories

The Countless divide their Theories into three categories: Principles, Fundamental Theories, and Distance Theories. Principles are those Theories that all Countless understand instinctually; the Holographic Principle being the prime example. Principles are concepts so central to existence that Countless learn them by experience rather than careful study—the same way Humans learn concepts like object permanence, language, or theory of mind.

Fundamental Theories are those that describe the physics of the Holographic Universe. Like Humans and advanced physics, not every Countless bothers to study Fermion Sculpter but most are passingly familiar with its products and underpinnings. These Theories take dedicated study to learn and master.

The two Distance Theories explain how the Countless perceive and interact with separation. Spatial Theory describes a very slightly modified Scene Realm, and Temporal Theory is fundamentally the same as Time.

The Holographic Principle

The Holographic Principle states that all of the known universe (the Superficial World and nearby Subspatial Realms) is a projection from the surface of a

Anathema Grounding

The Countless do not have the innate ability to Invoke the Autumn the way changelings do. Instead, they have to intentionally expose themselves to their Anathema to cancel a Formula or other Holographic effect.

System: To fight the the effects of Holographic Reality, a Countless character may intentionally expose herself to her Anathema. Initiating Anathema Grounding costs an Ego point. For the duration of the exposure, Holographic Reality (including the environment, Formulae, and Chimera) are immaterial to the Countless though she can still perceive them. As with unintentional exposure to Anathema, Anathema Grounding triggers self-directed Hostility every round exposure is maintained.

singularity. Just *what* the singularity is is hotly debated. Disappointingly, two hypotheses formed along political lines: Collectivists advocat that the singularity is the Anthropic Horizon (or the beginning of Harmony), while the Prophets posit that an infinitely dense knot of Irradiated matter exists somewhere on the Surface. Fringe theories exist, but are generally excluded from the debate.

All Joined have an instinctive grasp of the Holographic Principle. Scholars familiar with the Fae Realm study the Principle in increasingly minute detail hoping to develop it into a full-fledged Theory of its own. The Holographic Principle explains how the Countless can “tune” their Formulae to effect different layers of reality. Formulae that effect Holographic Reality and Subspace manipulate the energies emitted by the singularity’s event horizon (altering the Holographic manifestation), while those that effect Surface Reality must work directly with the information substrate encoded into the event horizon itself. When a Countless’ Formula works directly on the information substrate the Singularity leeches away some of the Countless’ Zero Point Energy, while manipulating the energy emitted by the singularity has no such danger.

System: When a Formula’s target is a part of Superficial Reality, the caster must pay the Formula’s Glamour cost in Zed. Formulae that target elements of Holographic Reality have no Zed cost, but casting difficulties are increased by 1.

Under the Hood:

Diminishing the Fae Realm

Nerfing the Countless' version of the Fae Realm is a necessary outcome of several design goals for this project. Firstly, *Changeling: the Dreaming*, *Inanimae: the Secret Way*, and *Denizens of the Dreaming* all struggle to answer the question "If the Fae can access unlimited Glamour in the Dreaming, why do they think their existence is threatened at all?" Second Edition's answer to this was Bedlam, a punitive system that punished characters who spent too much time in or went too far into the Dreaming. C20's answer is Nightmare, a similar system that punishes players for eschewing Epiphany as a feeding method. Both of these solutions have their merits, but they lack the urgency of the other World of Darkness games' energy management systems. Characters in Vampire: the Masquerade are almost always surrounded by bloodbags, but feeding from every human they come across is a terrible idea for completely intuitive reasons. Unless a Storyteller decides to make the entire Chronicle about teaching Changelings to avoid strip-mining the Dreaming, the in-universe lore and player intuition just don't encourage restraint the same way. The most natural-feeling solution to this problem is that their home in the Dreaming simply isn't made of pure Glamour. Subspace is much less ephemeral than the Dreaming (at least as written); it has discrete worlds and clearly terminates at the Biospheric and Anthropic Horizons. Humanity's first successful voyages into Subspace changed that part of the Dreaming forever by introducing Banality and rewriting it to be made of mundane matter and mundane energies. Though the Countless hope they'll be able to someday decontaminate Subspace by removing all the Banality, they can't. Sometimes things change and they don't change back.

Secondly, players and storytellers struggle with *Changeling: the Dreaming*'s sometimes fuzzy line between what is a chimerical and what is a wyrd cantrip. Turning the Fae Realm into the binary Holographic Principle answers that question in a simple way: Do I need to apply the Holographic Principle? If yes, it's a Wyrd Cantrip. If no, it's Chimerical.

arc
segment

Fermion Sculpting

The point is that you are like a cloud: something that persists over long periods, while simultaneously being in flux. Matter flows from place to place and momentarily comes together to be you. Whatever you are, therefore, you are not the stuff of which you are made. If that does not make the hair stand up on the back of your neck, read it again until it does, because it is important.

–Steve Grand, Creation: Life and How to Make It

Like parents being shown a child's latest crayon masterpiece Fermion Sculpters have watched the growth of complex 3D printing among humans with bemusement and befuddlement. No one has yet stepped forward to accept punishment for revealing the secrets of Fermion Theory to humans. This Theory describes how the Countless relate to and learn to manipulate the inanimate matter found in the Holographic Universe.

●○○○○ Lepton Emergences

Advanced Fermionics is built on the bedrock of the matter that is most similar to the Countless themselves. Students begin their journey with study of thinking machines and simple logical machines —computers, programs, switches, and any inorganic matter that is either capable of learning or turning an input stimulus into an output action. Due to their interests and biological make-up, most Silicates have at least this level of understanding of Fermionics.

Surface Targets: Computers themselves, the code a machine is running, electronically stored data, transistors and other types of electrical switches.

Holographic Targets: Holographic computer programs (not including AIs), digital Chimera (sprites), digital Dross, certain Devices and Relics, certain Crafted Anchors, certain Tethers

Example Formulae

"C'mon," Keen whispered to the HMS Bowshock's computer. "We both know what they're making you do is wrong. You just need to listen to your conscious." **Dream Logic [Chicanery 3 + Fermionics 1]**

The Menehune Sprites were helpless as the Mockingbird capital ship powered up its Infection Beam. Their horror morphed to confusion as five minutes later it was still powering up.

"He did it!" someone cried. "Lu froze weapon's capacitors!" **Set In Stone [Chronos 3 + Fermionics 1 + Space 1]**

"How are you going to fit an entire map of the galaxy on a thumb drive?" Ava whispered.

"I've got one word for you," Samarskite smirked. "Compression." **Worms and Giants [Metamorphosis 2 + Fermionics 1]**

"If they come for us again," Ava muttered to herself as she worked on the computer's firewall. "The city's network is going to need some teeth." **Burning Thews [Dragon's Ire 1 + Fermionics 1]**

Having exhausted all other avenues to repair the machine, Ava prepared to dive into the malfunctioning program. **Dreamwalk [Oneiromancy 1 +**

Fermionics 1]

“Stupid thing,” the technician kicked.
“You could ask it what's wrong instead of hitting it,” Ava drew his attention to the printer’s error lights. “Let me show you how.” Between the Lines **[Naming 1 + Fermionics 1]**

●●○○○ Mixed Media Printing

At this level, Countless expand their capacity to understand the nature of any matter that takes an input value and changes it into a new output value. Everything from the complex like a difference engine or other calculating tool that transforms data from one form into another to the simple like levers and pulleys which transform force values.
Surface Targets: Non-electronic logical machines like abacuses, switches, and levers. Simple machines like wheels and pulleys.
Holographic Targets: Dross not covered under lower levels, Holographic machines similar to Surface targets such as a Knocker’s clockwork servants, the machinery in a Silicate’s forge, a Boggan’s mechanical pocketwatch, certain Devices, certain Crafted Anchors, certain Tethers.

Example Formulae

Though none of her purely human relatives remember him, they’d all been served by the Cavendish clockwork *aide de camp* as children. Clopiner, for his part, was glad that his current master, Tritium, wasn’t as hot tempered as her great grandfather Tommy. The limp Clopiner got from that one was one appelomantic curse too many. **Nickname [Naming 2 + Fermionics 2]**

“Do you have any better ideas?” Samarskite asked.
When it was clear the room did not, she resumed constructing her Formula to interrogate the spy’s strange whirring recording device.

“Tell me what you were doing here,” she said to the ancient video camera. **Willow Whisper [Primal 1 + Fermionics 2]**

“Move!” Tritium commanded the broken lever. **Dictum [Sovereign 4 + Fermionics 2]**

“I analyzed the data from the FATE computer (**Augury [Soothsay 4 + Fermionics 2]**)and I know what it’ll take to get this monstrosity working again,” Lu gestured at the Silicate’s fabrication plant. “But you’re not going to like it.”
“Well?!” Babbage was tired of Lu’s dramatics.
“It seems the plant is plagued by Gremlins,” Lu continued. Electric Gremlins [**Skycraft 2 + Fermionics 2**]. “The Cantrip was a failsafe to make sure that if the owner disappeared, no one could duplicate his process for creating plastic guardians. We’ll have to placate the Gremlins somehow.”
“Don’t Gremlins usually only mess up electronics?”
“I think it’s safe to assume that just as we know tricks analog Fae don’t, these alien Fae have skills we lack.”

●●●○○ Composite Molding

Most inorganic objects encountered in human-dominated Surface environments fall under 3rd level Fermionics. Where humans have developed complex chemistries and machines for molding composites, composites are are clay in the hands of Bachelor Fermionists. The Association of Professional Fermionists is actively worried about humans developing new ways to recycle plastics, as the tidal wave of plastic detritus produced by civilization provides a nearly limitless, versatile, and most importantly, free building material for Fermion Sculpters.

Surface Targets: A plastic bag, a thermos, a kitchen knife, a fleece sweater, microplastics, silver mists.
Holographic Targets: Zed-contaminated matter, Vitae, material Tass, simple Devices, certain Crafted Anchors, certain Tethers.

“The Fabricator has several components,” Lu explained. “Each runs a different aspect of the process. First we need to get the recycling plant working again.”
“What good is that?”
“It’s a Treasure that takes any plastic material and separates it from contaminants.” (2 dot Treasure that casts **Purify [Pyretics 2 + Fermionics 3]**)
“After that, we’ll need to clear the reprocessor of Gremlins.” (5 dot Treasure that casts Reweaving [**Naming 5 + Fermionics 3])**
“Finally we’ll have to get the plastic molds, cooling system, fleece and dye systems back online.” (4 dot Treasure that casts Beastskin [**Metamorphosis 4 + Fermionics 3**])
“Once we’ve done that, all we need to do is feed the Fabricator plastic garbage and we get our guardians,” Lu concluded.
“Who knew building an army of animals that would be immune to Nature Cantrips would be so difficult,” Babbage sighed.

Samarskite taped the plastic sheet over the hole the harpoon made when it tore free. Waving the heater back and forth over it, the sheet became taught and tougher than the laquered wood around it. **Dragonscales [Dragon’s Ire 3 + Fermionics 3]**
“Okay,” she radioed to Ethyl.
“Repressurize the cabin. This should hold long enough for us to get back home.”

The HMS Taliesin’s avatar picked up his newly modified optical scanner and reinstalled it in his eye-socket. (**Illuminate [Pyretics 1 + Fermionics 3]**) Tally was skirting dangerously close to acting outside of his mission parameters, but he felt the situation required it. The ship’s avatar wandered his lonely corridors, careful to step around his fallen crew, slowly casting his improved vision all over the ship’s interior. To fix the air-reprocessors and save his crew Tally needed to catch the saboteur alive.

●●●●○ Compounding and Alloys

At this level, Master Fermionists learn to manipulate all but the most pure elemental matter. Anything that’s alloyed with anything else (but still inorganic) is now the Sculpter’s plaything.
Surface Targets: A cold-iron nail, a sterling silver ring, a glass window
Holographic Targets: Unstable Dross, most inorganic Subspatial matter, ruins of Countless settlements in Subspace, certain Glade Anchors, certain Tethers.

“How is it your arctic mining operations always find Deuterium?” The LPC investors always asked.
“Trade secret,” Tritium always responded. **Seer’s Wisp [Soothsay 2 + Fermionics 4]**

“That’s a lovely wedding ring. When was the last time you were able to take it off? It looks like it’s been a while,” When Tritium activated the app on her phone the lawyer’s ring started to shrink. “No lies this time. Explain what went wrong with the acquisition before you lose that finger.” **Worms and Giants Metamorphosis 2 + Fermionics 4]**

Tritium touched her Tesla Staff to the Tacitus, turning its strange energy inward against itself. The ancient Celestial data sphere shattered into a thousand pieces. **Lord of Levin [Skycraft 5 + Fermionics 4]**

"Much better," she regarded her traitorous employees' silence. "Now that you've outed yourselves, would those of you with designs on my company please tender your resignations?"

"You may continue your research, but in future please report any of your findings directly to me," Tritium returned the Tacitus the LPC technician.
"But wait, I thought you said you destroyed the Tacitus."
"It's amazing how much one Holographic sphere looks like another to people with a strong enough desire," Tritium smirked. **Aphrodisia [Summer 3 + Fermionics 4]**

I'm done, Ethyl Signed. *Locked on to the ship's engine plume now*.
The green-black overhead display showed a a trail of faerie-dust leading away from the Hydra. She heard Ava's little gasp as she noticed the tiny, bright, dot of the HMS Taliesin's engine burning hard at the end of the plume. Ethyl smiled with intense satisfaction.
"We have to hurry," Samarskite called from the Hydra's Condenser Chamber. "They'll notice our scan and change course soon." **Tattletale [Soothsay 4 + Fermionics 4]**

●●●●● Baryon Smithing

Doctoral level Fermionists are capable of crafting Formulae that humans would consider nothing short of miraculous. Baryon smiths are capable of refining, purifying, transmuting, and manipulating pure elemental matter with minimal effort.
Surface Targets: A Garou-ending silver needle, pure helium, lab-grade uranium 235, lithium, tellurium.
Holographic Targets: Stable Dross, certain Glade Anchors, certain Tethers
Example Formulae

Preparing to rescue Ethyl from the Garou, Samarskite carefully loads her shotgun with silver shot juiced with a little something extra. **The Poisoned Apple [Autumn 3 + Fermionics 5]**

"Here's your blood money," Ava hoped that greed would stop the scum from investigating the briefcase. Transforming a tailing pile of Unstable Dross into enough Concordian coin-of-the-realm to meet ransomers' demands was a risky gambit. "Now where's Keen?" **Elder-Form [Primal 4 + Fermionics 5 + Space 1]**

Though not their most profitable venture, the LPC's portfolio of renewed terrestrial wells provide a stable once-monthly flood of valuable methane gas without relying on dangerous hydraulic fracturing. **Renewal [Spring 5 + Fermionics 5]**

The vault at the heart of Merlin's Basketweavers was protected by a selective forcefield that only allowed high-ranking members of House Dougal to touch the Dross it contained. **Guest List [Sovereign 3 + Fermionics 5 + Space 2]**

"The trouble with a pure silver blade," Samarskite said. "Is that silver is a very soft metal and deforms easily. Normally." **Oakenshield [Primal 3 + Fermionics 5]**

Fields

You may not feel outstandingly robust, but if you are an average-sized adult you will contain within your modest frame no less than 7 X 10^18 joules of potential energy—enough to explode with the force of thirty very large hydrogen bombs, assuming you knew how to liberate it and really wished to make a point.

—Bill Bryson, A Short History of Nearly Everything

Where the Fae developed the Nature Realm to explain what they believed were the fundamental elements of the world, the Countless arose in an environment that was for most of its existence devoid of some (or all) of the things that Nature governs. What use are the four classical elements to a Kite in the protoplanetary stellar disc? How useful is the ability to manipulate plant fibers for a Silicate on Phaeton? Nature only really makes sense to the Ancestors, who came to be in life-bearing pockets of the Holographic Universe. A coalition of Ancestors and Oppies works to create a Unified Theory of Natural Emergences by welding Nature Realm's insights to Field Theory's rigors.

By exciting or depressing the fundamental fields that give rise to the Holographic Universe, Field Theory allows the Countless to create Formulae with wide-ranging effects: From flinging an opponent off into space by manipulating local gravity to creating elegant search algorithms to search the entire Internet for a lost child's image to directly manipulating Zero Point Energy itself.

●○○○○ Weakly Interacting Fields

A mark of mastery for creatures born on the Surface, yet astonishingly intuitive for the Countless, the fields that give rise to the base matter of Subspace are the very first element that students learn to manipulate. Nuclear radiations, Zero Point Energy, Breakthroughs, and all their permutations are covered in even the most rudimentary correspondence courses. Scientists theorize that Anthropic Radiation is a formerly unstudied product of a non-interactive field, but due to its toxicity Field Theorists are unable to study this Radiation directly. They instead study the energies it produces when it interacts with Subspace's better understood particles.

Surface Examples: Nuclear radiation

Holographic Examples: The Mists, Glamour/Zed, ley lines, Breakthroughs, Quintessence, Gnosis, Formulae that effect the above.

Example Formulae

You're not getting through our armor, Ethyl thinks to herself as another volley of cannonfire slams into her sailship's ablative field. *Better reinforce the field (***Oakenshield [Primal 3 + Fields 1]***) just to be safe, she decides.*

After years of study, Morgan became sure that this volcano had the potential to become a UFO's heart. He laid his carefully crafted Formula for **Renewal [Spring 5 + Fields 1 + Temporal 5]** over the volcano's dormant Zed. As the caldera filled with Zed-fortified lava he used another Formula (**Portal Passage [Wayfare 3 + Fields 1 + Temporal 5]**) to open a Breakthrough into Hadean Subspace. His work for the day finished, Morgan dragged himself down the volcano’s slope to the abandoned observatory at its foot. Tomorrow he will begin the hard work of maneuvering the right sort of human volcanologists into “discovering” the miracle resurrection of the volcano. But tonight... he would rest. Little did Morgan suspect that the volcano was already home to long dormant Dreams.

Samarskite shivered as her Hostile Environment Equipment’s dosimeter activated the suit’s radiation protection. The Formula (**Hardened Heart [Winter 2 + Fields 1 + Temporal 3]**) she'd programmed in as a safety precaution began circulating a life-saving supercooled water buffer through her shell’s hydraulic systems, rendering her safe for the moment. She’d have to work fast, but there was a chance she could stop the reactor from exploding.

●●○○○ Dark Matter Fields

Building on their understanding of simple Subspace Fields, Associates of Field Theory expand their Formulae to include the control of alien forms of matter that interact with Superficial Reality (but little else).

Surface Examples: Vitae, Tass, Unstable Dross

Holographic Examples: Formulae that effect the above

Example Formulae

Suspended by the rapel, into the geyser wall Keen injected a solution comprised of spores and nitrogen-fixed carbon. This specific Formula (**Verdant Reclamation [Spring 2 + Fields 2 + Space 1]**) was specially designed to help the geyser’s chimerical ecosystem recover from the damage the harpoon did during Operation: Rope the Goose.

“YOU MAY EXPERIENCE A SLIGHT PRICKING SENSATION.” the Mockingbird parroted as it drained Llandra’s blood. The Tremere laughed weakly to herself as the Mockingbird drained her. Everything was going according to plan. Soon the monstrosity would drink from her, and she’d have a bloodbound slave to study. Her exaltation mingled with bemusement as she watched the monstrosity place the vials of her stolen Vitae into a centrifuge.

“UV RADIATION REMOVES CONTAMINANTS FROM QUESTIONABLE DRINKING WATER IN SIXTY SECOND OR LESS,” the Mockingbird recited as the centrifuge began its purification Formula (**Purify [Pyretics 3 + Fields 2]**), separating lighter Zed from more harmful heavy compounds.

“Give up! The Freehold is ours!” the leader of the corby shouts from the other side of the reactor door. “We’ll let you live if you surrender!”

Ratatoskr makes sure his FUBAR device is working before he unlocks the door. The Formula (**Lord of Levin [Skycraft 5 + Fields 2 + Space 1 + Temporal 2]**) deactivates magnetic containment on the UFO’s matter/anti-matter reactor.

The Redcaps flood into the reactor control room and begin to tear Ratatoskr apart. He saw their leader’s gloating expression change to concern just before the reactor breach kills them all.

●●●○○ Composite Boson/ Graviton Fields

Baccalaureate Fields include the forces that govern weight, density, and attraction. Field Theorists are perpetually amused by humanity's attempts to create a quantum theory of gravity, having ironed that particular bit of physics out before Biospheric life had even started on

Earth.

This level of Fields includes a variety of applications beyond the literal. Formulae constructed with these Fields can strengthen, weaken, create and destroy attractive force between two bodies as well as doing the same for the attractive force between people, things, and even ideas.
Surface Targets: Weight, buoyancy, momentum, attraction and repulsion
Holographic Targets: The attractive force between two people, procrastination (emotional momentum) or humor (emotional levity), temporarily altering someone's intelligence (intellectual density), Formulae and Cantrips that affect the above.

Example Formulae:

The Concordian security patrol blunders into her trap (**Trick of the Light [Chicanery 1 + Fields 3 + Space 1]**)and stumbles, as their perceptions of their own gravity are disrupted. In the confusion, Keen beats feet.

Ratatoskr, sensing a way out of this mess, uses a Cantrip (**Sparrows and Nightingales [Metamorphosis 1 + Fields 3]**) to reverse the charge of the attractive field that lay between the Sidhe lord and the idea of centrism.

Tumbling out a 40th story window, an Abyssal increases her bouyancy (**Worms and Giants [Metamorphosis 2 + Fields 3]**). She is "miraculously" unhurt by the fall.

The Silicate guard curses as her bullets bounce off the Mockingbird's Holographically enhanced armor plates. "Switch to HV ammo! It's using defensive Formulae!" **Confounding Coils [Dragon's Ire 2 + Fields 3]**

Outnumbered and outgunned, Samarskite has only one trick left to play. She uses a Formula (**Runic Imprint [Saining 4 + Fields 3 + Space 1]**) to increase gravity in the room she's barricaded herself in. The Celestials finally tear through the door, entering the room to do the same to her… but they are unable to cope with the heavy gravity and collapse in a heap immediately upon crossing the Formula's threshold.

The Prophet interrogator crafts a Formulae (**Shivers [Autumn 5 + Fields 3]**) to allow Ava to experience the truth of gravitational Harmony. Soon she'll give up her secrets.

●●●●○ Elementary Boson Fields

The modern human world relies on electromagnetic forces in ways very few people truly appreciate. This creates great opportunities for Masters of Fields to manipulate and influence the world. From the relatively unsubtle uses of magnetism or light to create distractions to crafting Formulae to steal cryptocurrency from humans' wallets or track down a dissident's real world location using only their online handle, the invisible electronic infrastructure of the world is clay in the Masters' hands.
Surface Targets: Electricity, light, radio waves, magnetism, electromagnetic radiation.
Holographic Targets: Formulae and Cantrips that effect the above.
Example Formulae

Sam uses a Formula (**Willow Whisper [Primal 1 + Fields 4]**) to decrypt and understand secret data she's acquired from the Virtual Adepts.

Captain Keen needs Kodiak's radio to maintain a higher bandwidth connection than it is technically capable of. Broadening the transmission band (**Quicksilver [Wayfare 2 + Fields 4]**) gives her just enough connectivity to finish hacking into the Concordian flagship before its crew see through her fake IF/F signal.

Pirates jam their target's radio (**Hardened Heart [Winter 2 + Fields 4]**). By the time the crew get the SOS out, their Drillcarrier has already been boarded.

While the crew is investigating the Mockingbird outbreak, the SV3F committee commissions their best hackers to discover the true face of the entity controlling the Mockingbirds. Using a complicated Formula (**Saining [Naming 3 + Fields 4]**) on the captured Mockingbird's datalink to home, they determine only that the puppetmaster calls itself "Botnet 1".

Lost in the wilderness and hunted by hostile Ancestors, Ethyl doesn't have time to wait for her cell phone to recharge on her foldable solar panel's pitiful output. A quick, though costly, Formula (**Renewal [Spring 5 + Fields 4]**) allows her to bring her phone's battery back to life and call for help.

●●●●● Fermion Fields

Doctors of Field Theory finally begin to understand the fields that give rise to purely mundane phenomenon and craft complex Formulae that manipulate the fields that move mundane matter. Although this knowledge is hard-won for the Countless, Changelings are shocked by the difficulty with which they master such "basic" concepts. Cunning Formulae use this knowledge to great effect in creating illusions, spying, summoning or abating natural disasters, and enabling the Countless' survival on the Surface.
Surface Targets: Soundwaves, wind, currents and waves in fluids, earthquakes and avalanches in solids, thermal radiation.
Holographic Targets: Formulate and Cantrips that effect the above

Example Formulae
A near hominid Ancestor stirs the shadows of prehistoric winds to life (**Creeping Shadows [Autumn 1 + Fields 5 + Space 3]**), hindering the poachers' movement through the scrublands

A common Formula (**Seer's Wisp [Soothsay 2 + Fields 5]**)used to locate the sources of known vibrations (such as a lost person's voice or a Holographic waterfall's roar, the source of unexpected earthquakes in Texas, or even the direction of the sun when it cannot be seen).

Before opening the secret meeting of the LPC at a noisy night-club, a Celestial uses a Formula (**Guest List [Sovereign 3 + Fields 5 + Space 1]**) to create a demarcation between their table and the rest of the room—sound that emanates from their meeting can't be heard beyond their table, and the ambient noise from the rest of the club doesn't disturb their conversation.

Under duress an Abyssal steals a voice (**Gimmix [Legerdemain 4 + Fields 5]**) to draw everyone's attention to the critical reaction taking place. The victim of the theft is muted for the remainder of the scene.

A Silicate causes sound, the water in the fountain, and the ground itself to behave as if it were alive (**The Dance of the Five Kings [Primal 5 + Fields 5]**). Will this display overcome a nearby Low-Emitter's Anthropic Hostility and inspire them to see the intelligence of the inanimate world?

Omnitrophica
Aminicentantes
Rokubacteria
NC10
Acidobacteria
Tectomicrobia, Modulibacteria
Nitrospinae
Nitrospirae
Dadabacteria
Deltaprotebacteria
(Thermodesulfobacteria)
Falkowbacteria
SM2F11
Candidate
Phyla Radiation
Peregrinibacteria
Gracilibacteria BD1-5, GN02
Absconditabacteria SR1
Saccharibacteria
Berkelbacteria

Sapiology

> ***Consciousness cannot be accounted for in physical terms. For consciousness is absolutely fundamental. It cannot be accounted for in terms of anything else.***
>
> ***–Erwin Schrödinger***

Sapiology, or the study of Superficial life, is a relatively new field for the Countless. Though it existed for ages as a fringe field, the first Sapiologists to be taken seriously by society were the those who pioneered the Earthbinding. As the vast majority of Surface life falls under the purview of Sapiology, modern nights see the field elevated to one of the three fundamental Theories.

The Theory of Sapiology breaks life into five different kingdoms: familiar life, hidden life, immobile life, strange life, and dead life. As students of Sapiology improve their understanding of the different kinds of life present in the Holographic Universe, they come to be able to Formulate ways to effect creatures less and less like themselves.

●○○○○ Cogitariae

The entrypoint for the study of life is kingdom Cogitariae, or life similar to the Countless. According to Sapiologists all life emerges from and serves the whims of creatures whose minds are like the Countless'. Students of Sapiology learn to craft Formulae that manipulate themselves and creatures whose minds are most similar to theirs.

Surface Targets: Humans, cetaceans, octopedes, great apes

Holographic Targets: Countless, Changelings, intelligent Chimera and other Ephemera related to Surface targets

Example Formula

They knew that the AI's safety limiters forced it to shut down, which probably meant that it was a psychotic wreck, but they needed to know what happened to its ship. Keen circumvents the safety system and coaxes the Administrative Intellect back to life (**Awaken [Spring 1 + Sapiology 1]**).

Tritium's morning routine involves waking at 4am, an intense cardio workout, a light breakfast, strapping into another harrowing session in the Neo-Umbrella Co. anti-aging infusion chair **(Set in Stone [Chronos 3 + Sapiology 1])**, then dressing for her morning LPC meetings.

Ava Littlewing knew her disguise was flimsy at best. Odds were her little lifeboat was going to be found by the Concordians. She was going to be captured and "questioned" about what she was doing in the Heavens. Though relearning intentionally forgotten information was never pleasant, she couldn't reveal what she didn't know. Ava spent her last few hours of freedom to self-hypnotize herself into forgetting everything she knew about her past. **(Veiled Mind [Chicanery 4 + Sapiology 1])**

Today was the day. Zapakh cooed gently to Amy as the last dose took effect and her body painfully transformed. In just a few hours, the zoo would open and the first guests would find a little Deaf girl

Accounts Conflict:

Is it Fermionics or Sapiology?

Dealing with the fantasy technology present in a Countless game the question of whether any specific computer program falls under Fermionics or Sapiology is bound to come up. Computers are made up of unliving matter, which should make them subjects of Fermionics. The existence of thought experiments like the Turing Test and machines being taught to play chess (and other games), show that the possibility that computer programs could someday be made in the likeness of a human mind, which would put them under Sapiology's purview.

For the sake of simplicity, if a Formula targets a synthetic intelligence's mind (programming, memories, dreams, etc) it must include Sapiological principles. If it targets an AI's hardware (computers, networks, power sources, etc) it is based on Fermionic Theory.

who must have fallen into the ape enclosure. Once she was "rescued", Zapakh would sweep in, playing the hysterical mother who had lost her daughter, and zoo security would release Amy to her. With any luck, the zookeepers wouldn't notice that their famous Signing gorilla was missing until they were on the plane to take Amy home to Angola. (Thousandskins [Metamorphosis 3 + Sapiology 1])

Tritium wasn't above getting the regulatory body's lawyers sick the day before opening arguments. It was as matter as contaminating their coffees with powerful immune suppressing agents and letting the Surface's disgusting environment do the rest. **(Electric Gremlins [Skycraft 2 + Sapiology 1 + Space 1])**

●●○○○ Occultatia

The kingdom Occultatia is the playground of Cryptologists. Many of the Countless' distant relations fall into this category. Sapiologists acknowledge that creatures classified into this kingdom are capable of thought, but the quality of their thought is degenerate or defective somehow. Occult life is most frequently considered similarly to how humans view neanderthals and other near-humans.

Surface Targets: Hunters, Hedgewizards/ Exceptional Citizens, Mages, microscopic life.

Holographic Targets: Adhene, Thallain, Mockingbirds, Avatars of Harmony, Chimera and other Ephemera related to Surface targets

Example Formulae

"Once you're geared up," Tritium explained to the Fir Bolg. "Push this button. The Tesla Shield won't last forever, but it should be enough to convince them that you're who you're pretending to be." **(Storm Shroud [Skycraft 4 + Sapiology 2]**)

Ethyl uncapped and probed the fetid oxygen reclamation pipe. Its contents never smelled good exactly, but something was clearly wrong with the Hydra's O2 system. **(Autumn Eyes [Autumn 2 + Sapiology 2])**

Samarskite further protects her upgraded M/MI using a specific key known only to her, Ethyl, and Keen. Hopefully this would protect her from Botnet 1 long enough to find the data they needed.

(**Guest List [Sovereign 3 + Sapiology 2]**)

"Any good corporation has carefully and clearly delineated paths of advancement for all employees, and the Lunar Power Corporation is a very good corporation. Even our human employees, should you perform well enough in their roles, have advancement tracks. Those of you who excel at research, mining and refinement, or engineering may find yourselves moving up the ranks from Unmodified Temp, to Modified Temp, all the way to Long Term Enhanced. Very few humans make it to Enhanced status, but those who do will find that we encourage them to continue to develop and excel in their roles. Those who do very well on their quarterly performance reviews may submit requests for Direced Evolution Treatments." **(Reweaving [Naming 5 + Sapiology 2])** — Excerpt from "Congratulations on Your Promotion! (LPC Employee Manual for Recently Modified Humans)"

"Illness from days of old, lead me to your genetic code," the genehacker sang to herself while her Formula analyzed the sample. **(Saining [Naming 3 + Sapiology 2])**

●●●○○ Alienia

Alienia contains animate life that is capable of simple, or basic, thought. Bachelor level Sapiologists are capable of “translating” their higher order thoughts to the simpler impulses that the creatures of this kingdom understand (and vice versa).
Surface Targets: Animals not covered by other levels of the Theory, shapeshifters.
Holographic Targets: Animate (but unintelligent) Chimera and other Ephemera related to Surface targets.

Example Formulae

Ethyl sprayed herself with the bottle of synthetic Garou pheremones. Okay, she steadied herself. Time to do some science. **(Grandeur [Sovereign 2 + Sapiology 3])**

Crafting pleasant dreams as a way to introduce herself and establish rapport with her targets was one of the most difficult parts of any rescue operation. Zapakh's heart broke as often as it swelled in mistreated animals' dreams. She was never sure how much her targets' really remembered, but these creatures deserved a gentler touch than Sovereign offered. **(Dreamwalk [Oneiromancy 1 + Sapiology 3])**

"Hey, hey, it's okay," Ava (that's what her captors said her name was) kept her distance from the Celestial waterbear her captors had locked her up with. It looked starved and half-crazed, but she didn't think she looked much better. "I don't know who you are, I'm not here to hurt you."
Some forgotten part of her ached for the waterbear, even though their captors clearly hoped it would kill her. It was so small it was... it was a baby, that forgotten part of her knew.
Ava let her instincts guide her, and her forgotten self knew that if she followed the Formula (making the right calming noises, keeping her posture just so, not looking in its eyes) she could calm this half-rabid chimera's aggression. **(Chill [Winter 1 + Sapiology 3])**

"The nanites will slow the infection," Dr. Crusher's needle did not look very clean. "But, this prototaxite fungus is aggressive. If we don't get you to a surgery where I can excise the infected tissue soon, we're going to have to amputate. And, gonna be honest, I'm not planning on finding out what *this* infection tastes like." **(Ensnare**

[Legerdemain 1 + Sapiology 3])

"Remember," she hoped the waterbear understood her. "Don't move until they're in the cell with us."

Her memories restored, Ava's plan was to Glamour her cellmate to appear dead and herself to appear bloodsoaked. She hoped their captors would be too shocked by their know-nothing, unarmed, prisoner having (apparently) murdered the much more dangerous waterbear to suspect an illusion until they were too close to escape the waterbear's revenge. **(Trick of the Light [Chicanery 1 + Sapiology 3 + Space 1])**

●●●●○ Sessilia

The Sessile kingdom contains life that the Countless consider barely life at all. Sessilia can be coaxed to thought by application of complex Formulae or accidental applications of Zero Point Energy, but their natural state is one of near thoughtlessness and motionlessness.
Surface Targets: Plants, animals that don't move.
Holographic Targets: Inanimae, Wraiths, living (but inanimate) Chimera and other Ephemera related to Surface targets.

Example Formulae

"Fine," Babbage dropped the old photo into the flames. "If you won't help us, go back to Hell."
The Wraith was transfixed as his fetter refused to burn. Instead, the flames burned away the connection between him and the photo. His last fetter gone, the Wraith faded into Oblivion. (**Purify [Pyretics 3 + Sapiology 4]**)

After spending two decades replanting and tending the grove, Rob O. Thompson deployed a swarm of self-maitaining drones to monitor the forest. The second any of the trees fell to any cause other than natural death, he would know. **(Liar's Bell [Contracts 2 + Sapiology 4, Space 4])**

When the rampaging lycanthrope stepped into the circle of carefully prepared seeds, Ethyl threw the switch in the control room. The security camera showed her that the throwback was first caught, then tried to tear the vines apart. His claws were more than enough to destroy a few vines, but after only a few seconds the chamber was filled to choking with them. **(Time Dilation [Eldrich Prime + Sapiology 4 + Space 1])**

Tritium couldn't believe her luck. Not only had they uncovered an Inanimae Anchor, but it was a lithium Glome! It seemed to be dead, but LPC researchers discovered that "death" had a different meaning in the Sessile kingdom. Soon, this excavation would provide off-planet LPC operations with more lithium than they'd be able to use in a year, all without having to pay the current administration's ridiculous import tariffs on Chinese products. **(Renewal [Spring 5 + Sapiology 4])**

"Did you know that this plant cures cancer?" Sam lied. **(Aphrodisia [Summer 3 + Sapiology 4])**

●●●●● Putridia

Doctors of Sapiology have come to understand that the most efficient engine of entropy is life itself. Life emerges from energetic turbulence, produces highly ordered patterns, reduces the energy gradient of the universe, then inevitably falls to entropy itself. Putriologists craft Formulae that work with formerly living matter and the life that relies on it.
Surface Targets: Fallen trees, compost, meat, carcasses, corpses, Vampires, Revenants, Hsien, fungus, decomposing

microbes, marine snow

Holographic Targets: Chimera and other Ephemera related to Surface targets

Example Formulae

The Prophet inspected his work. Compost Zombies were never exactly "pretty", but he always found a certain beauty in the way the Formula sculpted decomposing matter into the semblance of life. **(Dance of the Five Kings [Primal 5 + Sapiology 5]**)

"I'm pretty sure she's just asleep. You could wake her with a kiss. Very romantic," Sam lied. **(Aphrodisia [Summer 3 + Sapiology 5])**

"Since buyout negotiations seem to be at an impasse, perhaps we should take a break? Would you mind discussing something else while my staff fetches some food?" Tritium changed tactics.

"Of course," Mr. Fang said.

"My, ah, research indicates that your kind are in some ways very similar to us. The difference being that we take a Host while it's alive, you take them at the border of death," Tritium let her extra arms slide out of her sleeves once the humans had left. "Ghost stories are particular fascination of mine and I realize this is silly, but since you have more experience with the topic of 'human death' than I do, I wonder if you'll indulge me. It's a faux pas among us to admit our Hosts have any power over us at all, but you'd be hard pressed to find a Countless who doesn't occasionally hear whispers from her Host. Do you also experience such imperfection in your Joining?"

"We don't consider it an imperfection. We live to fulfill both our karmic debt and our hosts'."

"Is that so?" Tritium feigned interest. "Do you have a choice? Are you planning to 'avenge' your Host, as it were?"

"We all must," Mr. Fang rolled his eyes dismissively. "As expiditiously as possible."

"Fascinating!" Tritium smiled to herself. **(Casual Contract [Contracts 4 + Sapiology 5)]**

Distance Theories

(Conjunction Realms)

We can only see a short distance ahead, but we can see plenty there that needs to be done.

-Alan Turing, Computing machinery and intelligence

The Holographic Principle, the Principle of Propinquitas Affinis, Spatial Theory, and Temporal Theory form the foundation of the Countless' science of distance. The Holographic Principle helps them understand how Holographic and Superficial matter can sometimes occupy the same location yet be noninteractive. Spatial Theory describes their relationship to the three spatial dimensions, Temporal Theory explains the strange knots that time sometimes makes, and Propinquintas Affinis explains how points that are seemingly very distant (in Holographic, Spatial, or Temporal terms) can still be made to interact.

Spatial Theory

One fourth of the Unified Theory of Distance, Spatial Theory describes how the Countless perceive three dimensional space. Incorporating Spatial Theory into their Formulae, Countless can project effects far away from their location. Spatial Theory is identical to the Scene Realm. Combining Propinquitas Affinis with Spatial Theory creates Formulae with incredible reach.

Temporal Theory

The second part of the Unified Theory of Distance, Temporal Theory explains the Countless' relationship to linear time. A

Relative Proximity Limitations

Max Successes	Signal Quality
1	**One-way communication:** Radio transmission, television, (with Temporal Theory) relaxation tapes.
2	**Poor-quality two-way communication:** Walkie-talkies and comm badges, SMS, a chat-room, unstable cell phone connection.
3	**High-quality two-way communication:** Video-chat over stable broadband, satellite video or audio link.
5	**Xenotechnological communication:** Entanglement pools, other long-range Formulae

strong grounding in Temporal Theory allows the creation of Formulae that can loop back on themselves. Temporal Theory's levels and mechanical effects are identical to the Time Realm. Combining Temporal Theory with Propinquitas Affinis creates Forumlae with limited capacity to reach backward through time.

Propinquitas Affinis

Applying the Principle of Relative Proximity, Formulae can manipulate distant subjects through mundane or xenoscientific communication devices (such as radios, phones, webcams, VHS tapes, etc). Effectiveness of Formulae transmitted this way is limited by signal quality. Due to technological limitations, reaching through the Temporal field with Formulae that incorporate Propinquitas Affinis is almost always limited to signal quality 1.

System: Applying Propinquitas Affinis to any Formula adds one Zed to its casting cost and one difficulty to its bunk. Relative Proximity can only be applied to Formulae that utilize Spatial or Temporal Theory.

Possible Targets: the person the caster is talking to over webchat, the caster's dog through a nannycam, a video of yesterday's misadventure culled from a security system.

Abduction

The reasons to Abduct a human are many. Standard excuses revolve around studying their biology and culture, to getting access to the human's resources, to acquiring technicians to bolster a Zed harvesting operation. Some Countless go so far as to Abduct humans out of loneliness.

The techniques used in Abduction vary as much as the motivations behind them. Mockingbirds, for example, utilize a drug and nanite mixture that improves the human ability to perceive Holographic Reality while leaving them hypnotically receptive to suggestions from Botnet 1. The Symbiosis Collective typically relies on a heavy dose of pure Zed, while Prophets prefer indoctrination and psychological reprogramming.

The victim's immune system, sense of self, and Irradiation all play a role in returning an abducted human to its natural state. An Abducted human left on Earth will more rapidly return to its native state than one Abducted and taken into Subspace or an Undefined Fantastic Object.

Humane Abduction System: Humane Abduction utilizes the same process for Enchanting mortals as standard Changelings (see “Temporary Enchantments” in *Changeling: the Dreaming 20th Anniversary Edition* pg. 461). Humane Abductions are generally quick, taking at most a scene to enact. The primary difference is in the narrative flavor of the effort. Changeling Enchantment revolves around themes of gift-giving, hospitality, and indebtedness. Countless Abduction revolves around the scientific, medical, and paranormal. Abduction "bunks" might be bizarre medical procedures, hypnotic suggestions, encounters with strange lights on empty highways, lacing someone's drink with Holographically active drugs, etc. The key is, as with all the narrative differences between vanilla Changeling and Countless, getting humans in the proper mindset for a sci-fi (mis)adventure.

Forced Abduction System: Victims of Forced Abduction are subdued (either physically or by some other means) and forcefully “modified”. The exact form of the modification varies (surgery, drugging, and indoctrination are common) but takes several hours. Forced Abduction allows the Countless overseeing the procedure to turn the Enchantment check into an extended action if necessary to overcome the victim's Radiation. The Storyteller may opt to wave the rolls for convincing or creative role-play.

Enhancement System: Infrequently, Countless may decide to Enhance a human. Enhancement functions identically to The Ritual of Parted Mists [Changeling: the Dreaming 20th Anniversary Edition page 461], though resembles the techniques utilized in other Abduction methods. The subject of Enhancement acquires a number of Mutations equal to the total ZPE they get from the procedure. If and when that Zed is spent the Enhanced human loses the Mutation associated with that point of Zed. The result is an Abducted human who remains Abducted, potentially, for the rest of their life. Their implants may require periodic maintenance, and an Enhanced human whose implants are allowed to fully degrade develops an insurmountable resistance to further applications of any Holographic power.

XenoForm

Whether it's the surreal beauty of a swarm of Kites, the terrible power of a bushel of Silicates, or the familiar appearance of a strangeness of Ancestors, the Countless' Xenoform represents the height of their inhuman power [for systems see "Invoking the Wyrd" in *Changeling: the Dreaming 20th Anniversary Edition* pg. 259].

Subspace refugees continue to crash-land on the Surface from increasingly distant places in Subspace. These new arrivals have only their Xenoform until they are Implanted into a human. These Countless lose 1 point of Zed per hour spent without a host on Earth. When there is no more temporary Zed to be lost they begin losing permanent points of Zed. When the final permanent point of Zed is lost the Countless suffers fatal Radiation poisoning and dies forever. Those who are rescued in near-Earth Subspace fare slightly better, losing a point of Zed per day. As the Earthbound Countless re-establish themselves in Subspace they move their chirurgeons off-world to take advantage of the lower Radiation level available there. The slower rate of Radiation poisoning helps them choose more appropriate hosts than they were able to during the First Wave.

Freeholds: Undefined Fantastic Objects

We've gotta become the Martians. I'm a Martian – I tell you to become Martians. And we've gotta go to Mars and civilize Mars and build a whole civilization on Mars and then move out, 300 years from now into the universe. And when we do that, we have a chance of living forever.

—Ray Bradbury

The variety of Countless-engineered Subspace settlements and transports makes it difficult to classify them as any one thing. Port Mohole bares little resemblence to the Solar Observatory which, itself, has nothing in common with Kuaihelani City. Taking a cue from human culture, Countless architects cheekily called their ships and habitats “undefined fantastic objects”. Before they realized what they had done the name stuck.

UFOs have access to all expanded Freehold features [*Book of Freeholds* pgs 26-28] except Balefire and Passageways. The Countless do not draw their power from the Dreaming and so Balefire is replaced with the Condenser System. Subspace is not conveniently navigable with safe(ish) Silver Paths (nor is most of it, strictly speaking, habitable) so the Countless do not typically rely on Passageways—instead they travel through Subspace on UFOs that have the Maneuverability or the Transit Transceiver Systems. Countless typically refer to the Sanctuary feature as their Security System, but otherwise that Freehold feature is identical.

Below are additional Freehold features (called Systems by the Countless) that expand the Freehold system to better accommodate mobile Freeholds.

Active Cloaking [1-5]

While unmodified humans will subconsciously avoid UFOs, just like they avoid Freeholds, some determined investigators (not to mention other Inhumans) are immune to this effect. Deploying active cloaking technology improves the UFO’s ability to hide both on the Surface and in Subspace. Each point of active cloaking adds 1 to the difficulty of Perception checks to notice the UFO. This effect is halved (rounded down) on supernatural efforts to detect the UFO (such as another UFO’s sensors, a Mage using sphere magic, a Vampire using Auspex, etc).

Administrative Intellect [3]

A single sane Admin Core is a prize worth its weight in Zed. Few of these wonders survived the Tidal Event. Of those that did survive, most are hopelessly Irradiated and dangerously insane. The rare AI that is both functional and sane is capable of a wide range of adaptive functions. Due to their dizzying processing power and just-in-time decision making abilities most AI cores are integrated into UFOs as their Administrators.

Once a UFO Admin is installed and assigned its core mission it is capable of both general housekeeping UFO systems,

Accounts Conflict

Advanced AIs

Some crews report that their UFO's Administrator has developed capacities beyond those expected of the technology. Some seem to be more like Mannequins. Others resemble Lycians. For a touch of mystery or conflict, Storytellers may wish to write their players' AI into something else based on how the crew treats it. Likewise, a player may want to play the AI. In either case, using a more complete game system (such as the Inanimae or Lycians) will provide a more satisfying experience.

providing advice relevant to the UFO's mission, and fulfilling the Operator role for systems that require one. A UFO's AI can only Operate one System at a time.

Worryingly, even AIs deemed sane are running outside of operational safety limits in terms of Anthropic Radiation exposure. The effects of this long-term exposure are not well understood, but the most pernicious glitch observed so far has been that AIs left running for a very long time will develop a "personality" based on their mission and their interactions with the UFO's crew.

Feature: Core Threading [3*]

Not all Administrative Intellects are created equal. Some are capable of running multiple concurrent Avatars (or Threads). Buying this Feature allows the AI to control an additional Chimerical Avatar. This Feature can be bought multiple times. Each additional Avatar increase's the AI's ability to function as a system Operator by 1.

System: Create the Administrator as a 3 point Chimera. This Chimera serves as an "avatar" for the UFO. It might be a hologram, an android, a living extension of the UFO, or whatever else is appropriate. It draws its Zed from the UFO's power source. Its personality is determined by the UFO's archetype, aspect, quirks, and the way the crew treats it. It cannot leave the UFO.

Broadside Cannons [1-5]

The traditional weapons of naval combat, broadside guns have been in use since before the Tidal Event. Broadside cannons vary by the Subspatial Realm they're meant to operate in: flak cannons work great in Voidspace, but their projectiles would lose speed and melt almost immediately in Hades. Wave Emitters are useful for running drillships aground in Hades, but are too short-range to be effective in the Abyss.

Feature: Specialized Ammo [1-5]

Broadsides Systems can integrate the Operator's Formulate/Cantrips at an additional purchase price of 1 Freehold Point per Practice/Art level. (That is to say that a UFO with Specialized Ammo 3 can accept Cantrips of up to 3rd level of any Art the Operator knows.)

System: An Operator using the Broadsides System rolls Firearms + Perception limited by the UFO Broadsides + Maneuverability ratings. Standard Broadsides guns have 6 dice of hardness damage on a hit.

Restriction: Broadside Cannons are complicated machinery and cannot function without an Operator.

Condenser [1-5]

All UFOs are equipped with a basic Zed Reactor that supplies the power necessary to run the UFO's Systems. For a variety of reasons, some UFO Reactors are designed with excess capacity, allowing them to produce Dross for their crew's use. Each Freehold Point spent on the Condenser System allows the Reactor to create one point of Dross per narrative tick (typically one day).

Restriction: Condensers require an Operator to function. Due to the ongoing nature of their production, a Condenser Operator must be able to dedicate 8 hours of uninterrupted labor per day to the task of operating the System. Wealthy and influential Countless frequently assign Abducted human technicians the task to free up more versatile crewmembers for other work. Non-human crewmembers may not be assigned as Condenser Operators.

Example: The Mammon Machine
The Zed Condenser most familiar to Earthbound Countless will be the in-situ Mammon Machine design. These Condensers are fed Zed-charged Surface materials by Operators. Irradiated material is then separated from Dross through a series of chemical and mechanical actions. Finally, technicians condense and bottle the Zed into a liquid form ready for use by the Countless. Irradiated waste products are then returned to the Surface environment.

EVA Vehicle Bay [3]

Some UFOs are motherships and are capable of launching smaller craft. The EVA Bay extends the range of the UFO's EVA missions by including a number of vehicles that fly, swim, or otherwise travel through Subspace more quickly (and safely) than is possible for Countless in SLS suits. This system may be purchased more than once. Each purchase adds another Subspaceworthy EVA vehicle capable of safely housing 2 crewmembers for up to 8 hours.

Feature: EVA Landing Gear [1]

This feature is identical to the Maneuverability System's Landing Gear Feature, except that it applies to EVA craft.

Restriction: EVA Vehicles require a pilot.

Maneuverability [1-5]

UFOs without Maneuverability are stationary relative to other points in space. As with Life Support Systems, different Subspatial Realms require different kinds of propulsion and ship construction. The low pressure environment in the Heavens requires different hull construction than the high pressure environment of the Abyss. Maneuverability can be bought multiple times—Each time it applies to a different Realm.

At 1 point an orbiting space station might have a VASIMR thruster to help it maintain its orbit and evade debris. At 2 points a Hadean drillship could have a set of turbines that propel it through the Earth's mantle. A 5 point flip-and-burn style engine would allow a deep void UFO to traverse the solar system at the speed of plot.

Feature: Landing Gear [1]

UFOs with this Feature have the equipment and shielding required to breach the Surface, allowing them to have a Passageway to the Surface.

System: The Operator's Drive/Pilot + Perception limited by the UFO's Maneuverability + Sensors Systems determines the UFO's passive Dodge value for ship-to-ship combat. The Operator's Drive/Pilot + Perception limited by the UFO's Maneuverability + Sensors determines the UFO's speed while traveling.

Restriction: Without an Operator the UFO is dead in the water. UFOs that are dead in the water cannot take evasive maneuvers or resist ambient forces (such as currents, gravity, momentum, etc).

Point Defense System [1-5]

The Point Defense System allows a UFO's crew to fire flak or debris into the path of incoming objects, giving them a chance to protect themselves from ship-to-ship weapons fire that was unsuccessfully evaded.

System: PDS value gives the UFO a soak roll against incoming projectiles.

Restriction: Requires an Operator.

Subspace Life Support System (SLS) [1]

Since the Earthbinding, the Countless have studied the limitations of their new forms. One outcome of this research was the Subspace Life Support System. Capable of maintaining terrestrial life in Subspace, an SLS is required equipment for any UFO meant to travel into the unknown. Whether in the maybes of space, zipping along on the surface of asteroids and comets, far below the ocean's surface, or deep in the Earth's mantle, these UFOs present benefits to their owners.

Freehold points spent on life support represent UFOs that exist in Subspacial environments that are hostile to terrestrial life. While they may be accessed directly from Subspace, doing so requires specialized equipment and so UFOs with the life support System get a free dot of Security, even if this takes them above the usual limits. Additionally, the UFO cannot be accessed directly from the Dreaming or the Surface (unless it happens to be within those Realms) —would-be burglars must find a way into to the appropriate Subspatial Realm, then survive its environmental conditions long enough to break in. The form the life support power takes is up to the UFO designers, but always takes a pseudo-scientific angle.

The Life Support System includes equipment that provides safe but limited personal access to nearby Subspace. The nature of the environment dictates the sort of equipment provided; a space-station would include space suits or xenotechnological bubble generators, a deep ocean city would provide diving gear or bathyspheres, while a hollow Earth mining post would include lamps and dinosaur-repellent pheromone spray.

System: UFOs without the SLS power are only capable of supporting life within the Biospheric Horizon. If a UFO without Subspace Life Support travels into a Subspatial Realm its inhabitants are subject to that Realm's environmental Conditions as if they had attempted to access the Realm directly.

SLS can be purchased multiple times. Each new SLS proofs the UFO against a different sort of hazardous environment. For example: a UFO with an SLS for Voidspace would be crushed if it attempted to explore Venus' atmosphere, and so its owners much purchase a second SLS for high pressure, caustic, environments if they want to survive the experience.

Bonus: The first SLS provides one free point of Security, even if this raises the UFO's total Security rating beyond the normal maximum of five. SLSes beyond the first do not provide this benefit.

Transit Transceiver [5]

These ancient Countless Devices are

quite rare, and those with the engineering skill and xenobiological knowledge to modify them to safely transmit terrestrial materials are in high demand. This Freehold System grants your UFO a single, functional, transit transceiver pad capable of transmitting to and receiving from attuned devices.

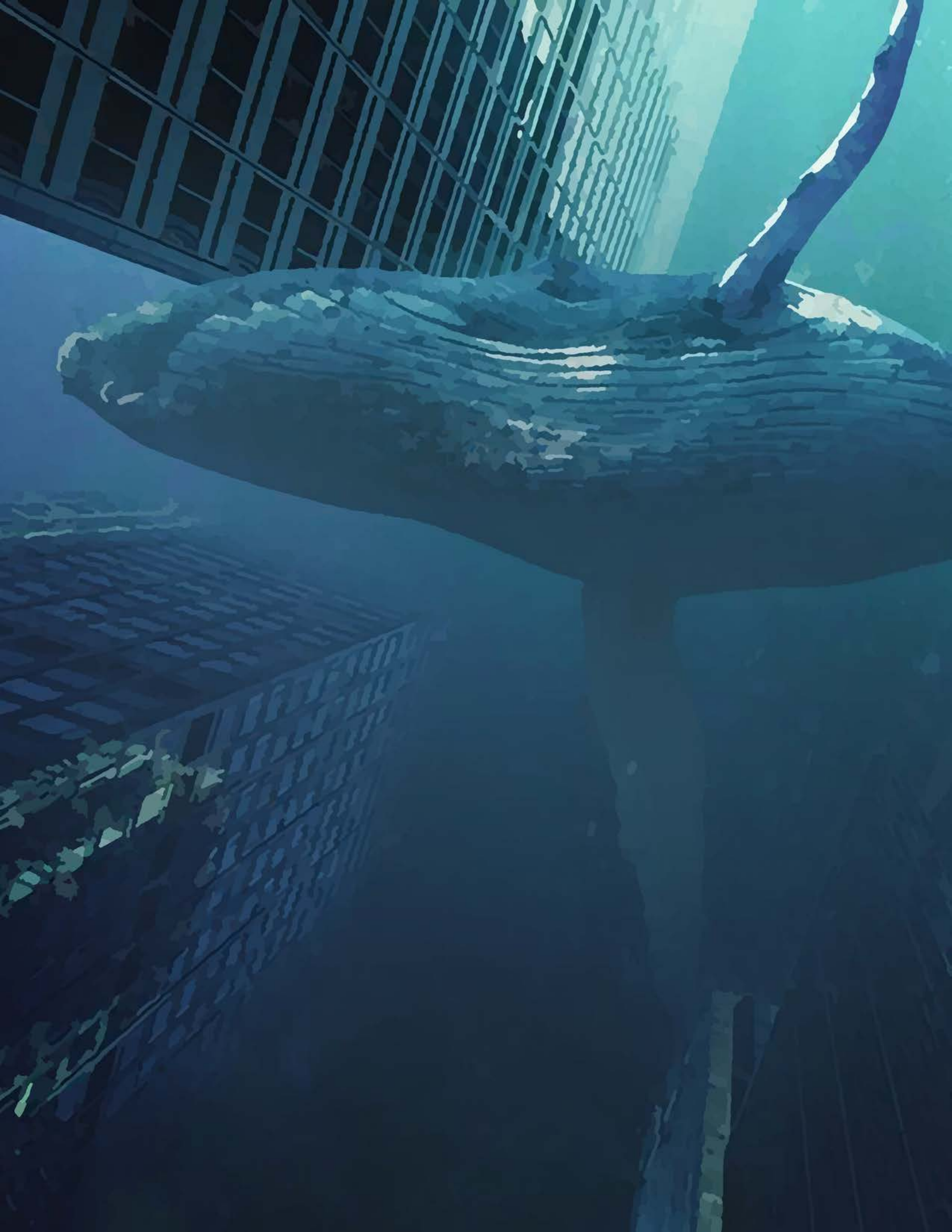
Feature: Hacked Pad [2*]

Some Transit pads have been modified to transmit more than one. Transceivers so modified can transmit and receive objects that fall under tertiary Theories. This Feature can be purchased more than once. Each purchase "teaches" the Device a new Theory. It is up to the Storyteller whether or not transit pads can be modified to assimilate Distance Theories, as Spatial and Temporal Theory radically alter what a transit pad might be capable of.

Restrictions: The translation pad where the target matter appears or disappears is only as large as can be affected by Scene 1, and so Transceivers are not capable of sending or receiving matter larger than could fit in a small closet. Reality interference stops Transit Transceivers from transporting things into or out of the Dreaming.

Transit Transceivers require an Operator capable of spending Zed.

System: Choose one Theory (typically Sapiology or Fermion Sculpting). The Transit Transceivers behave similarly to the **Flicker Flash** Formula cast by a Countless who knows every level of the chosen Theory. The Operator pays the Cantrip’s activation cost (typically Superficial + Distance Theory = 2 ZPE)



CODEX III

SINGULARITY

Contrivances

"This is supposed to scare me? They're just illusions."

"I can make light solid, chump."

–The Flash vs. Luminus, "Only a Dream"

The most important question for a Countless Storyteller is “What kind of story do you want to tell?” The book up to this point describes a setting that is in line with the World of Darkness’ focus on the Earth as the center of action, but your story doesn’t have to follow that path. Do you want to tell a story about the last Countless and their humans escaping a dying Earth aboard an FTL generation ship? Is the surface of Mars the site of an open conflict between Concordian settlers and indigenous, intelligent, chimera who don’t appreciate their homeworld being invaded? What does an invasion of forgotten Heavyworlders from a distant exoplanet mean for the Earthbound Countless?

Sample Preludes

Eden Initiative

The Eden Initiative is a corporation of Forgotten, Abducted humans, and a smattering of others whose mission is to restore lost biodiversity where possible and preserve species on the brink of being lost where restoration is unfeasible. Several groups with implied connections to the Eden Initiative are responsible for eco-terrorist activities all over the world, but the corporation’s work supporting food production in famine-stricken areas (and the lack of direct links between subordinate groups) have provided enough political cover for the corporation to evade scrutiny so far.

After a series of climate change related failures in the 2010s the Svalbard Globale Frøhvelv was in danger of complete failure. The Eden Initiative graciously stepped in to shepherd the project at no cost to the involved parties.

Mission Details

If any of the player characters have Contacts [Eden Initiative] 3 or greater or Status [Eden Initiative] 1 or greater they should be trusted with the Initiative’s background on the Vault. Since taking it over, the Initiative did work to repair and retrofit it to survive climate change. They also secretly used the seeds themselves to create a series of breakthroughs to different Biospheric subspace pockets where those plants thrived. The ultimate goal of the project was to use the seeds to produce breakthroughs to Echo biomes where plants whose genetic strains were lost still existed.

Act 1

The Lights Are On...

After years of public-facing projects to shore up the seed vault’s resilience against the warming tundra, everything seemed to finally stabilize. Three months ago a relief crew went out, and the crew they were meant to replace never returned. A search and rescue team (the player characters) is activated and sent to the Vault via mundane overland means.

The party discovers that the door systems all work but there is no response from the door communication panel. Entering the Vault is uncomplicated, and investigation is likewise not difficult. At first nothing seems amiss (other than the Vault being abandoned). Deeper into the vault, however, things start to get weird. The heat and humidity gradually increase. Searching the site-crew's living quarters finds things left as if everyone was spirited away in the middle of a normal day. Coffee-sludge is burning on a hot plate, uniforms left on a drying rack, a shower is running, etc. The crew quarters show the first signs of something going seriously wrong—pools of biofilms have collected in corners, under beds, and in closets. Analysis [Science 8 or Dowsing 6] shows that the biofilms are saturated with Zero Point Energy. Touching one provokes a burning sensation as the film begins to climb up the bodypart in contact with it [1 bashing damage & 1 Truth / round].

When the crew reaches the door to seed storage the rising temperatures and humidity culminate in an oppressive, jungle-like, environment with biofilm infested condensate rolling down the walls. Lying face-down in a puddle of biofilm just in front of the door is a human-shaped corpse wearing the Eden Initiative engineering crew uniform. Touching it results in the same damage as earlier [1 lethal & 1 Truth / round]. Rolling the body over reveals that its face and any other exposed skin has melted into biofilm. The name patch reads "Emelie Hagen".

Opening the door to seed storage produces a puff of very hot, very wet, fetid, jungle air and reveals a surface settlement of tents, RVs, and other makeshift structures surrounded by actual jungle. Analysis [Dowsing 6] confirms the obvious—this door leads to the Shadow, [Science 6 or Alertness 8] reveals that the jungle "plants" are actually giant, prehistoric, fungal stalks.

Act 2

Whodunit

Passing through the Breakthrough to the settlement shows it to be populated by the missing people crew, alive and well (minus Emelie). Talking with them reveals that they're simply *fascinated* with this biome and lost track of time outside the Echo. Questioning them about the body at the Breakthrough's threshold is met with denial and surprise. Nobody will know what happened to Emelie nor remember when she left.

Trying to get them to leave the Echo will at first be met with apparent acquiescence, but it'll take time to pack all their samples and experiments. A series of increasingly unlikely delays will result in missed departure after missed departure. The excuses should all be believable on their own, but pile up into an unbelievable mess (We need to pack up our equipment, we'll have to take away the waste to make sure it doesn't contaminate the surroundings, wild chimera stole the keys for the ATVs, etc). While wasting the crew's time the Storyteller characters should be trying to build rapport with the crew, showing them how amazing the Echo is, culminating in somehow exposing them to the Echo's biofilm (lab accident, food contamination, spraying someone with it while they sleep, shoving them into a prototaxite pit, etc).

Once the players begin to understand the Vault's crews' treachery they will probably make a plan to escape and/or free the Vault crews from the Echo's Harmony. Directly confronting the Vault's crews will be met with open aggression. Openly attempting to "cure" them will also kick off mob justice. While the prototaxites can be subtle, they do so to avoid unnecessary damage to themselves, the Jungle, and potential food/hosts. Once it becomes clear their subterfuge has failed, they'll cut their losses and try to throw as many of the crew into the pits as possible. Always remember that the prototaxites have numerical advantage.

Act 3

Invasive Species

However they manage to escape to the Echo, the presence of biofilm outside the Breakthrough means the Breakthrough itself is a threat to the Surface. How the crew escaped the Echo will have a huge influence on their next steps. Using Wayfare to escape may deposit them somewhere other than the Vault, possibly giving them access to Eden Initiative's (or other organizations') resources but also giving the Jungle time to fortify the Vault against them. Escaping through more mundane means will put them in the Vault itself and likely without backup, but having the element of surprise might count for a lot in finding a way to close the Breakthrough.

Design some chimerical horrors to reflect a past so divorced from the world we know today that it could be an alien planet. These will be the Jungle's defense against whatever the crew comes up with.

Picking Up the Pieces

`This mission has quite a few potential endings, all dependent upon how the crew reacts to the Jungle. If you're using this mission as the beginning of a chronicle you'll want to several questions: Is the Vault secure? Was anything spoiled by months of neglect? Will the Eden Initiative attempt to cover up their experiments and what does that mean for the crew? How does the Initiative explain the apparent deaths of several employees? Did the Jungle manage to contaminate Biospheric Space (if so, how widespread is the infection?). Did the Initiative know how dangerous the Jungle Breakthrough was? Why did they create it?`

The Oceania Group

Mission Background

In response the climate change related challenges like rising sea-levels and extreme weather, a Tahitian corporation formed to develop the technology to build infrastructure on the ocean surface. The Countless (Abyssals in particular) as well as several sea-centric changelings were attracted to the project. Anchored just off the coast of Sydney, the prototype "Oceania City" features a collection of modular "islands" supporting housing, infrastructure, farming, water production, and commerce.

Most excitingly for the Abyssals, the

city is supported by a kind of mildly electrified lattice meant to attract and foster coral colonies. These nascent ecosystems could provide Countless with new opportunities to harvest Zed from the Abyss. The most optimistic Kites believe that between harvesting Zed from the sea and cultivating Low-Emitters among the cities' human populations they might be able to use the cities as a network of Breakthroughs into Abyssal Subspace.

Commonly reported as "Project Oceania City" or "Sydney's Oceania District" in the news, Kuaihelani City has received significant logistic, financial, and technical support from the Australian government and playboy billionaire philanthropists across the world. The backlash if Kuaihelani turns out to be anything other than a roaring success could bury the Oceania Group.

The players should make characters who are Countless or sea-focused changelings who invested in, support, or otherwise work on the construction of the Kuaihelani City project.

Act 1

Shelter Party

Kuaihelani still has a lot of work before it's fully operational, but construction and testing continues only slightly behind schedule. The earliest hab and support modules are operational and mostly used to house the construction crews. A few investors and government officials have "showroom" facilities available for private use, but the only current long-term residents are the engineers and Oceania's CEO Manuarii Chen. The city is visible from Sydney, and currently relies on regular shipments of food, construction supplies, and potable water from the mainland. While the hab and support modules produce enough electricity to be self-sufficient, the city does not yet produce enough food or water to sustain itself for any significant period.

The Bureau of Meteorology has posted an emergency alert for New South Wales: a tropical superstorm has unexpectedly changed course. Rather than slowing and heading north-west through New Caledonia it is picking up speed and barreling toward Sydney. An evacuation order has been put in place.

An emergency meeting is held on Kuaihelani at the Oceanix headquarters. Crews (and whatever incidental residents are present) express concern over the approaching storm and want to head to the mainland. CEO Chen will point out that there isn't enough time to get everyone to shore with the boats available and that, regardless, Kuaihelani is designed to withstand storms of this magnitude. Allow the players to take part in the debate and planning for what to do, but remember that Chen wants at least a skeleton crew (and a few people from marketing) to remain to demonstrate the safety of the city. As long as Chen lets at least few people leave a full-on mutiny is unlikely.

In the hours leading up to the storm, the crew will be working to facilitate the evacuation of "nonessential" personnel and shoring up the city's incomplete systems. As weather models did not predict its sudden change of course, there is significant disagreement about how long the danger will last. Priority is given to getting atmospheric water collection and purification systems online, stowing construction equipment, and hardening the electrical grid by finishing any in-progress work and disconnecting unused systems. As the seas roughen feel free to harass the crew with simple problems both mundane (stuff going overboard, things unexpectedly flooding in the rain, wind knocking panels off buildings, etc) and magical (flocks of chimera fleeing the storm, parosemes and undines whipping up the stormy and making life worse, merfolk being… well… merfolk).

At T-2 hours to the storm everyone is to head to the Oceanix headquarters module and shelter in place. CEO Chen and the publicity team are, of course, having a storm party for the crew. To his credit, the food available is posh and plentiful (though pescatarian, as the city plan requires). Photographers and journalists mill through the event. At a dramatically appropriate moment, cut the lights.

Act 2

Fish Kill

[Have a clock, watch, or timer handy for this act.]

Following the storm, the crew needs to set about assessing the damage and restoring the infrastructure. Overall damage is pretty minimal, but the tidal harnesses are reporting nonsense to the power station and no one really knew how the fishery would withstand a storm. Let the crew decide which to address first.

Fixing the tidal harnesses will require a dive. While the crew is underwater an Abyssal Breakthrough tears open, releasing thousands of jellyfish. Crew safety necessitates abandoning the repair effort for now. Anyone getting stung will take a point of bashing damage [soakable] and a point of Harmonic Truth.

Assessing the fishery is a depressing affair. Though its pools were self-contained and isolated from the ocean, the storm blew the caps off the tanks and contaminated them. All of the fish are dead or dying. Restarting the fisheries will require draining the tanks, decontaminating them, and getting a resupply from shore. If any of the crew has an engineering or fishery related knowledge or professional skill, let them make a roll to determine the cause of the fishkill [difficulty 6]. The fish have been killed by algal ichthyotoxins.

Whichever task the crew decides to address first, once they've wrapped one or the other up start your timer and have the crew roll a stamina check [difficulty 8] to resist the tide's effects. Any character who fails feels dizzy, nauseous, and starts to become incoherent [+1 difficulty to all rolls]. If any characters have an asthma or other breathing-related flaw, they automatically fail the stamina check. Every 5 minutes increase

Subspatial Instability

Any formulae, cantrips, or other supernatural powers that reach across mundane distances or into a spiritual realm (the umbra, the Dreaming, Subspace, etc) replace their normal difficulty with the current red tide check. Regardless of success, every attempt to use magic to reach the outside world (or uses Scene 5 or any level of Time) contaminates the caster with a point of Truth. Botching causes the caster to be ripped from wherever they are in the city and ejected from the Abyssal Breakthrough into the jellyfish swarm. Add +3 Truth dice to any Unleashing roll.

the difficulty of the stamina check by 1 and have the crew reroll if they're still outside. Failures are cumulative up to a maximum difficulty penalty of +3. When the Stamina check difficulty reaches ten, increase the number of successes required and reset the difficulty to 7. When you reach 3 minimum successes required, have any crew indoors make an alertness check [difficulty 6]. Those who were successful on the check (and any crew outdoors) will notice the sea has become a brownish-red colour. Anyone who has an applicable skill (ecology, aquatic biology, microbiology, etc) can make a check to identify the problem [difficulty 6]: the city has become engulfed in a toxic algal bloom. Stop increasing the tide counter at this point.

Act 3

The Bloom

Though the storm has moved on from Kuaihelani, it stalled on the Australian coast. All nearby ports are inoperative, and getting mundane aid from afar is essentially impossible. The red tide is contaminating the nearby sea and atmosphere with its toxins and the unstable Abyssal Breakthrough below the city continues to spew jellyfish and chimera. Worse still, unstable Breakthroughs disrupt nearby Subspace, making supernatural travel and communication at best unreliable and at worst actively dangerous.

Red tides resolve themselves over time as the oceanic conditions return to normal. Unfortunately, this process is not well understood and can take days, weeks, or months. Oceanix did not anticipate the hazards presented by an algal bloom, and the city was not built to filter biological agents from the air system. Personal diving equipment and oxygen tanks are available, but this is at best a temporary solution. The crew will need to find a way to address the fungal bloom and the jellyfish if they're going to survive long enough to get help from outside. The city cannot be moved, as its modules are anchored to support pylons, but potential solutions (both mundane and magical) can work around that.

The Lunar Power Corporation

Mission Background

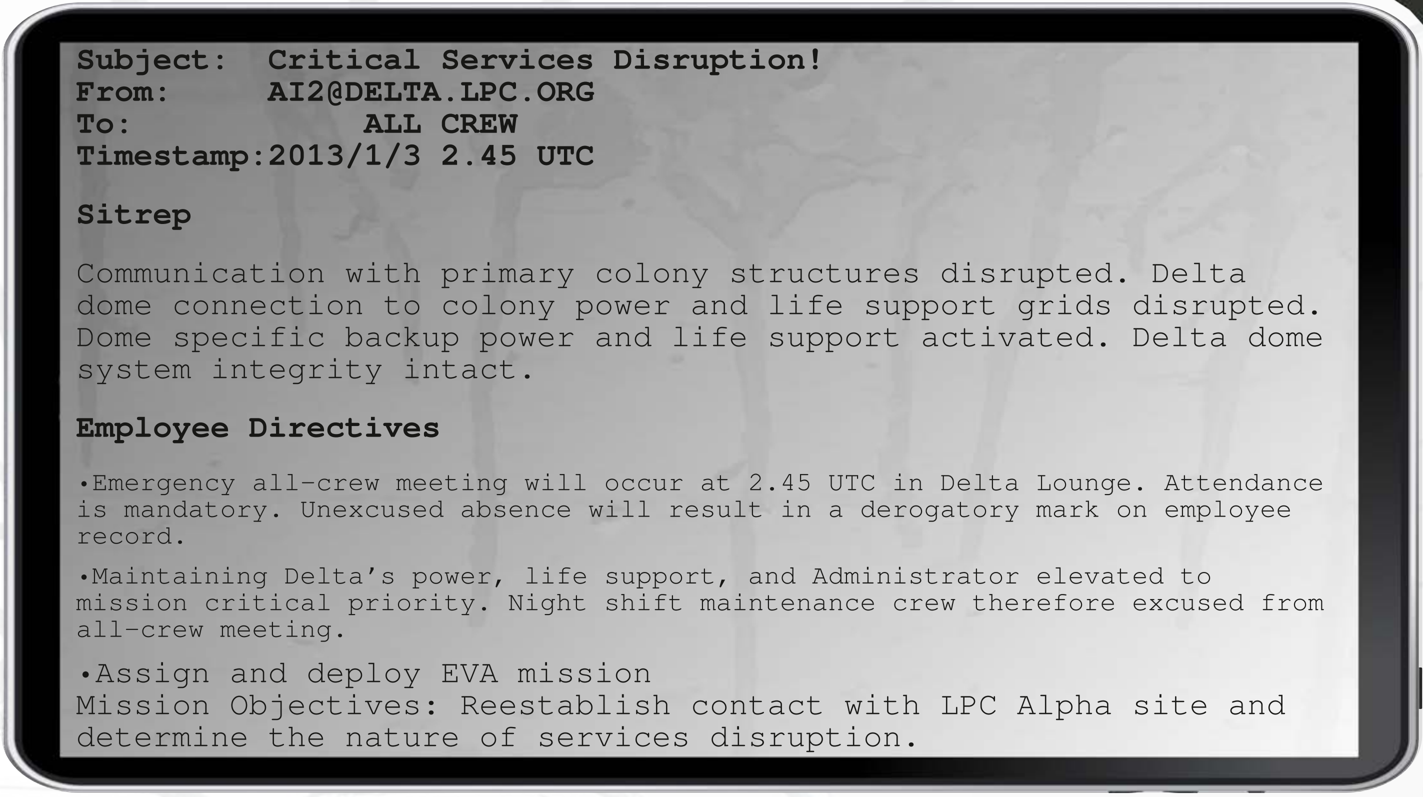
Partially shielded from the tidal event's tsunami of Radiation, the far side of the moon makes an ideal location for a Countless outpost. The LPC is the brainchild of Tritium, a Celestial Prophet, and a joint effort between a number of Kites, Silicates, and Forgotten. The corporation's dual missions are to harvest Selene's regolith (with its attendant tritium) as a fuel source for colonization and further expansion into the Heavens, and to build a nature preserve for wildlife threatened by human encroachment.

Though lunar life support and energy production is nearly self-sufficient, the moon is very poor in certain resources. This necessitates ongoing resupply efforts from the Surface. Growing political strife between the Allegiances threatens the project's supply routes from Earth. The LPC colony has roughly 6 months of emergency supplies if resupply is disrupted.

Act 1

The Times They Are a-Chang'eing

In the early hours of 3, January 2019 the night shift crew in LPC dome delta are going about their responsibilities when power fails. Everyone present rolls to resist Hostility. Let the crew spend about



Subject: **Critical Services Disruption!**
From: **AI2@DELTA.LPC.ORG**
To: **ALL CREW**
Timestamp:2013/1/3 2.45 UTC

Sitrep

Communication with primary colony structures disrupted. Delta dome connection to colony power and life support grids disrupted. Dome specific backup power and life support activated. Delta dome system integrity intact.

Employee Directives

•Emergency all-crew meeting will occur at 2.45 UTC in Delta Lounge. Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absence will result in a derogatory mark on employee record.

•Maintaining Delta’s power, life support, and Administrator elevated to mission critical priority. Night shift maintenance crew therefore excused from all-crew meeting.

•Assign and deploy EVA mission
Mission Objectives: Reestablish contact with LPC Alpha site and determine the nature of services disruption.

3 minutes fumbling in the dark. At this point power comes back on. Give them a minute to take stock, then give them the Critical Services Disruption! email (see sidebar).

People the all-crew meeting with a limited staff: Primarily Silicates and Forgotten with a smattering of other Countless. Assignment to Delta is viewed colony-wide as a crap job, and the Countless assigned are misfits and outcasts who didn’t do well in primary colony responsibilities. Decision-making may be somewhat defective, but most people involved are (at worst) incompotent or uninterested—not actively malicious. The outcome of the meeting is that the players are volun-told to go on EVA to site Alpha to find out what happened.

Traveling to Alpha should be annoying, but mundane. None of the colony’s xenotech vehicles work, but the slow Superficial tech buggies work fine. If any of the Countless on the EVA crew have Wayfare (or other relevant skills), they can expedite the trip. Otherwise it’s a 10km drive over the lunar surface. At 8km from Alpha any clever Formulas meant to expedite the trip fail. Have players roll to resist Radiation.

Terraforming and regolith collection facilities take on an eaten away quality as the crew approaches Alpha. At first they appear to be damaged (or perhaps eroded), which isn't unusual. Lunar dust storms happen from time to time. Closer to Alpha this quality takes on a fantastical bent—literal holes in anything with Holographic quality. The Selenetic chimerae are entirely absent. Finally at 2KM from Alpha the crew climbs the ridge overlooking Alpha to discover that there is no Alpha Dome anymore. It isn’t destroyed—it is as if it had never been there to start with. If the crew chooses to investigate further they’ll discover the Chinese Yutu 2 lunar rover. If they’ve investigated by physically approaching they trigger Hostility again. Attempting to use Formulae, chimerae, or Devices on the rover is difficulty 9 and provokes anthropic hostility strong enough to temporarily the disrupt xenotech EVA gear.

Returning to Delta, the crew is attacked by a small pack of Irradiated Selenetic Chimerae. Maddened by their Irradiation, these formerly docile creatures need to consume massive quantities of ZPE just to continue to survive, and the crew provides a very attractive target. Otherwise, the return trip is an uneventful drive (or hike if the buggies were damaged).

The crew reporting back to Delta command about the status of Alpha and the presence of the rover (if they discovered it) provokes heated discussion about what should be done. If the player characters haven't already discussed it, have a Storyteller character question how an inanimate object could create Anthropic Radiation. Until this point in their time on Earth the Countless have only observed actual humans Radiating.

Delta AI may be queried during the discussion. It will be most helpful in providing advice on how to get Site Delta into optimal operational shape, and may even demonstrate some creativity and problem solving capacity in this arena (use it as a Storyteller character who will help the players if they're overwhelmed with basic questions related to survival. Let them work everything else (such as Yutu 2's role or what happened to the chimerae) out on their own). Otherwise, it will only be able to provide or reiterate information already known.

Act 2

Refugee Crisis

A day after the EVA mission returns to LPC Colony Facility Delta, Delta AI alerts the crew that a message (see Aid Urgently Needed! sidebar) has arrived from Facility Omicron. If the crew interrogates Delta, it will inform them

System Logs

If the crew decides to check system logs they'll discover that the logs for all of Delta's systems are normal, but logs that require colony network (such as those for other domes) are inaccessible. Finally, exceptional hacking will gain the crew access to the Delta backup Administrator logs, confirming the AI's account of events.

LPC backup Administrative Intellect activity log

```
2.26 UTC: Power, life support, communications, and materials
suffered catastrophic disruption.

2.28 UTC: No carrier signal from primary colony administrator.
Backup Administrator automatically activated. LPC AI2 engages
Sterling Zed Generators. Delta Dome mission critical functions
(AI2 Core, life support) powered.

2.29 UTC: AI2 failed to fetch status report from other LPC
systems.

2.30 UTC: AI2 produces initial emergency alert and report.
```

What is Delta AI?

Delta's backup Administrative Intelligence is a normally subservient shard of the colony AI. The colony-wide comms blackout has severed it from the colony's main Administrator, for perhaps the first time in its existence. Treat it as a chimera (or possibly a Lycian) bound to the LPC Colony Delta Facility. It can communicate through Delta's communications systems including: monitors, speakers, radio, phones. LPC employees can communicate with it the same ways. During act 1 it shouldn't have much of a personality and its communication style should be terse and factual.

The colony Administration Intelligence is a piece of advanced xenotech designed to process the impossibly huge amounts of data the colony's life support, materials processing, energy, and security systems produce--filtering out unimportant information, handling simple decision-making, sending relevant information to the correct employee offices, and producing succinct reports for corporate meetings. The LPC Colony AI was designed specifically to lack self-direction and initiative as these were traits its silicate creators deemed likely to produce negative results. The Colony AI and its shards (including Delta AI) do not offer suggestions or information unless specifically prompted by crew interactions or its established mission imperatives.

that contact with that facility's network has not been restored and that the message is coming in OVA from an approaching supply crawler.

Querying Delta AI reveals that Delta Facility supplies are expected to last 6 months without resupply. Taking on the refugees cuts that in half. If asked, Delta will postulate that given evidence of survivors, scavenging materials from the other sites could as much as double Delta's operational lifespan. Assuming that enough equipment survived Irradiation.

Whatever the crew decides to do with the survivors, plan out a couple of dungeon crawls into the ruins of Omicron (for regolith processing equipment) and Tau (for hydroponics equipment and supplies). The ruins will be populated by minor cold iron chimera created by the Radiation wave that accompanied Yutu 2's arrival in the colony.

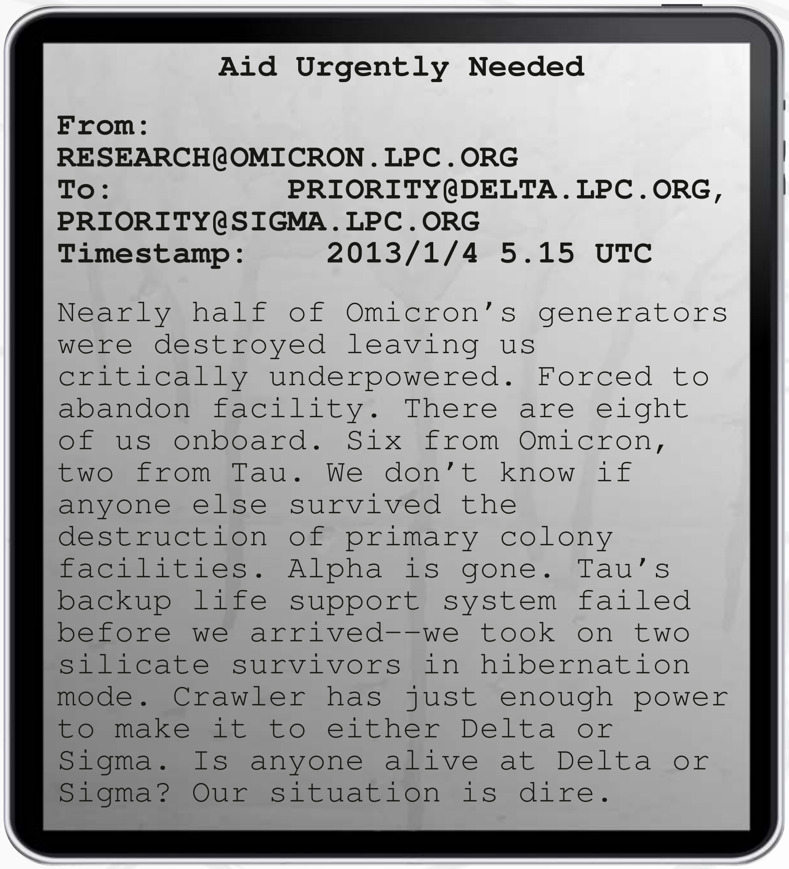
This act ends with the crew returning from successfully scavenging the required materials from Omicron and Tau (or dying). During the downtime between acts assume engineering competence among the crew (and refugees if the crew accepted them). Repairing and retrofitting Delta's mining and agricultural facilities results in Delta status improving from subspace habitat to UFO with the qualities listed under "LPC Site Delta" in the Readymade UFOs chapter.

Act 3

Rabbit From a Hat

After repairs and enhancements are complete and Delta is as self-sufficient as it can be, the crew may (if they haven't already) start investigating their options for escape. While long range communications and the launch facility were part of Alpha (and Alpha is gone), they may be able to bodge together a radio able to contact the Countless' satellite relay system. Shortwave radio isn't that complex and should be able to reach the Earth. If they do they won't be able to get a high speed data connection, but they should be able to get word to Earth that the mission is in danger of failure.

Without some cleverness on the players' parts this will be an insecure method of communication, and may have unforeseen consequences later. The lunar launch systems are a lost cause, but getting resupply enroute is imperative. If any of the crew know (or know of) Tritium, they know she'll move the Heavens and Earth to make sure this venture succeeds.



Aid Urgently Needed

From: RESEARCH@OMICRON.LPC.ORG
To: PRIORITY@DELTA.LPC.ORG, PRIORITY@SIGMA.LPC.ORG
Timestamp: 2013/1/4 5.15 UTC

Nearly half of Omicron's generators were destroyed leaving us critically underpowered. Forced to abandon facility. There are eight of us onboard. Six from Omicron, two from Tau. We don't know if anyone else survived the destruction of primary colony facilities. Alpha is gone. Tau's backup life support system failed before we arrived--we took on two silicate survivors in hibernation mode. Crawler has just enough power to make it to either Delta or Sigma. Is anyone alive at Delta or Sigma? Our situation is dire.

Now that survival is as assured as it can be fate sends two new complications.

First: The Chinese rover is slowly approaching Delta, Irradiating and unmaking the Holographic landscape as it goes. Its path is erratic and punctuated with many stops to investigate Lunar curiosities, so it seems clear that it isn't heading for the survivors at Delta on purpose—just an unfortunate coincidence that it will soon Unmake Delta and kill them.

Second: Delta Admin reports unauthorized access to facility airlock. Security footage reveals that the intruder is wearing EVA equipment from LPC Alpha. If the crew allows her in, or tries to establish communication with her in the airlock, she'll identify herself as Yù Yěmāo (if the table is going to have trouble with a Chinese name, call her Jade) from Alpha. Delta AI has access to crew assignments and dossiers and if queried will inform the crew that there exists no record of this person. Cursory medical scans (1-9 successes) reveal that she's not injured, but she *is* highly Irradiated (7-9 range). Examining her without EVA suit reveals a young Silicate, possibly a Digital Native. For more information see Yù's character sheet in the Readymade Character chapter.

If the crew allows her in she'll integrate into the crew with no real troubles. She's gregarious, friendly, and curious. Yù seems to have amnesia—she remembers nothing about Alpha specifically or the LPC generally. If interrogated about her role in the colony she'll tell the players that she was a new arrival. Curiously, Yù has no real understanding of how to operate Countless xenotech, but she learns quickly when shown how. She has natural talent with biotech (including medicines and hydroponics). Due to her advanced Radiation sickness she has an unfortunate habit of unintentionally triggering self-Hostility in the crew.

If the crew figures out that “Yù Yěmāo” is a pseudonym for “Yùtù” they should start suspecting Yù is, in fact, the Chinese probe. Likewise if they do a complete medical analysis (10 successes) of her they should discover that she’s doesn't have a Human Host, which rules out her being a Silicate. A Cladeologist examining any medical scan of her will be able to figure out that she is an Oppy.

What the crew decides to do with this information is the climax of this prelude. If they accept Yùtù, they might convince her to approach the rover and send it away. If they space her (or kill her outright) they’ll have to come up with another way to cope with their impending demise.

Botnet 1

Mission Background

Digital Natives formatted a foothold for themselves in the Space Voyages Fanfic Forums (or SVF3). Fiercely democratic (some would say anarchistic), the netizens of SVF3 System follow a live-and-let-die philosophy: As long as one does not directly harm the System, netizenship is open to anyone who can find their way to SVF3. Similarly, if one is unable to defend themself from the threats of Digital subspace, one deserves whatever happens to them.

Act 1

Software Piracy

The player characters are all part of a Subnet dedicated to proving the rumors that SVF3 Committee chair B. D. Lanthanide is involved in the disappearances of several prominent Netizens. One of them should have background points in Contacts: SVF3. Through their contacts they get a tip that Vitally, a minor element of the Committee, can get the Subnet access to Lanthanide’s port. When the PCs go to meet their contact at an abandoned Refinement factory they are just in time to witness Vitally being attacked by an unknown Silicate (see Antagonists chapter for Babbitt stats). Either the party or Vitally dispatch the Silicate, but Vitally has been infected with the mockingbird virus. He begins to reject his Refinements, leading to a painful death. Before he expires, Vitally hands over a paper note (how quaint!). The party now has Lanthanide’s access codes, allowing them to dock at his port.

Plan out an espionage run on Lanthanide’s Sector culminating in reaching the Sector’s command center. Make it as simple or challenging as the players want it to be—this act is meant to set up false expectations that this story is about politics and espionage. When the player characters finally reach the command center let them begin searching the records for the evidence they need. Before they can finish their search, security alarms start going off and a bunch of internal security monitors click on—revealing a half-dozen clones of Vitally’s assailant searching various rooms. Where they encounter whatever the players left of Lanthanide’s security team and defensive measures the mockingbirds triumph through tenacity and force.

Let the players attempt whatever escape they can come up with.

Act 2

Firewall

The Committee quickly reacts to the news of the mockingbird infection, shutting all ports and locking down access between the Analog World and the System. Several Subnets are deployed to search the System for mockingbirds. Primary objective is to destroy them, but if the opportunity presents itself these security Subnets are to capture a mockingbird for study. Other Subnets are deployed to search the System for unauthorized backdoors and close them. Choose whichever assignment sounds the most interesting to the players.

When a mockingbird is finally captured and “disassembled”, the Committee creates a firewall to block mockingbirds at the ports. This doesn’t help the situation with unauthorized backdoors, so the Committee updates the Terms of Service to include a prohibition against backdoors under threat of ban hammer.

Act 3

Root Access

Some time later in the Analog World, Countless start disappearing in eerily familiar ways. The Committee activates the players’ Subnet to search for mockingbird activity on the Surface. Give them an avenue to find a suspected mockingbird.

Denied access to SVF3 System, Botnet 1 started kidnapping Countless from the Analog World. From here the players have many potential avenues to explore. Some examples include: hunting down the source of the infection in Digital Reality, searching for the place mockingbirds are entering Analog Reality from and sealing it, investigating just what the Committee learned from their vivisection of that mockingbird earlier. Depending upon how interested your players are in pursuing a near apocalypse spy-thriller storyline, this could be the beginning of a long-term chronicle.

Green Grass & Running Water

Mission Background

When the American federal government ended the fourteen month Alcatraz Occupation by force, the High King was relieved that his new kingdom would not have to contend with a Nunnehi insurrection so soon after the Accordance War. The court seers knew that cinniúint flows like wind--stop it up in one place and it bursts forth from another. The fate that was averted when the Occupation was ended wasn't dead, and it would eventually come to collect what it was owed with interest.

After the Occupation was quashed the federal government and Concordian parliament turned their attention elsewhere. Fate would not be denied, and

Accounts Conflict

The End of Alcatraz

Like with many moments in history, the end of the Occupation wasn’t really the end of the movement. The American Indian Movement, the Longest Walk, and the Wounded Knee incident all have roots that go back to Alcatraz. Officially, the protesters were forcibly removed by the federal authorities. Though no one has ever found evidence of direct involvement, the new High King and Parliament of Dreams had vested interests in interrupting what seemed to be the beginning of a Nunnehi Resurgence.

quietly began carving new paths toward its preferred outcome. This prelude mission begins in Washington State, on the Olympic Peninsula. Players should make characters who are either Nunnehi, Menehune, or their allies among other groups.

Act 1

The Kodiak's Maiden Voyage

Lake Ozette, 1970

Kate, dragged out of her post-grad slump by her aunt, visits the new Ozette Village excavation . The relics show her Dreams of her heritage, triggering her Chrysalis. Their Dream Dance continues over the next few weeks, during which they shape their inspiration into an Undefined Fantastic Object capable of bringing them into humanity's next great unknown ocean—Outer space. Keen's Chrysalis attracts the attention of the PCs, who witness the Kodiak's triumphant launch. The rocket immediately lurches off course, and they have to devise a plan to either catch up to the Kodiak or follow Keen into the Heavens and rescue them. (See "Incomplete Kodiak" in the Readymade UFOs section.)

Virgin 'Tłisukdakain

Rotation: 27 hours
Orbital Period: 364 days
Equatorial Circumference: 5 kilometers

'Tłisukdakain is a place of extreme dichotomies. Dayside temperatures get up to 121C, while nightside is as low as -151C. Its rough surface has crags so deep that sunlight only barely kisses the bottom. In these deep trenches ice daily sublimates into water vapor before freezing again when the sunlight moves on. These geysers play host to diverse ecosystems of bacteria, archaea, mosses and even some larger animals that capitalize on the regular, but brief, availability of sunlight and water. When the temperature drops, all of these organisms undergo cryptobiotic processes to preserve themselves until the next day.

However the players decide to pursue them, Keen crash-lands on 'Tłisukdakain, an undiscovered asteroid that shares Earth's orbit. Despite their (and Captain Keen's) fragile changeling bodies' need for life support gear, there is a thriving chimerical ecosystem on the asteroid. The Kodiak has enough spare equipment to allow the crew to repair it, but its booster rocket (which is required for flight in the Earth's atmosphere) was damaged by a space bat and leaked out most of its fuel.

'Tłisukdakain has ice, but harvesting it and heating it to water will attract the asteroid's native life.

The dominant animal species is the mossbear. Eight-legged, and protected by a chitinous exoskeleton, most are smaller than a human hand and live in the geysers' cliffs, buried under the moss. During the brief daily periods when the geysers host liquid water, the mossbears wake up and eat whatever they find; moss (obviously), other animals, and sometimes each other. If the crew decides to harvest ice the easy way, their activities will likely awaken some of the little mossbears.

Depending upon how they treat the little mossbears, they may attract the attention of elder mossbears. Elder mossbears get to be as large as the Kodiak and are capable of remaining active outside of the geysers where their young mature.

Act 2

Trim the Sails

Periodically, Captain Keen would return home to trade her exotic chimerical goods for supplies. On one of these visits, she saw the rez's tech school students' demonstration of a machine that drew agricultural runoff from the lake and cleaned the fertilizer out of it. Keen was so impressed with their vision that she began to cultivate these students as Dreamers, with the hope that she could bring them to 'Tłisukdakain and turn her old campsite there into a self-sustaining outpost.

In the Waking World various advocacy groups (Indians of All Tribes, Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, the American Indian Movement, and others) met heavy resistance from settler governments. Many indigenous changelings suspected the Concordian kingdom's hand behind the mortal governments' actions, but proof was elusive. Following The Longest Walk protest, Keen calls the PCs together at Kaho'olawe to demonstrate the terraforming and life support tech she and her Dreamers have been creating at 'Tłisukdakain. The PCs (now influential members of their home cultures) should be enticed by Keen promising to help them bring that inspiration to their Dreamers. All she asks in return is a pact of mutual information sharing and assistance. 'Tłisukdakain becomes a research and trade hub for the entire Pacific region.

Act 3

Seeding the Future

'Tłisukdakain, 1986

Mortals "discover" Earth's "second moon", 'Tłisukdakain. By extension, Concordians have become aware of its existence. The Concordian Circle of Sainers has been commissioned to reName the asteroid "Cruithne", after the Cruthin (a name for the Tuatha's ancient Dreamers). The Alliance of Free Dreams launches a desperate counterattack against the the site of the reNaming ritual —York University in Toronto. At the same time, the Alliance's sailships are launched en masse to hook 'Tłisukdakain and pull it into a new orbit, not of the Earth, but of the sun itself. Even if the Concordian Sainers' ritual is completed the hope is that having changed 'Tłisukdakain and its relationship with the Waking World in such a fundamental way will cause the magic to fail.

Choose one of the two efforts for the players to be involved in. For a more traditional changeling-on-changeling battle sequence, choose the assault on York. The Sainers will have a large compliment of knights guarding them. (See "Concordian Knights" in Antagonists). For a logistics, piloting, and magical astrophysics skills challenge choose the towing operation. (Design your own or use readymade voidsafe UFOs).

Ultimately, this prelude lays the groundwork for the Pacifica Riots and segues gracefully into further tales of The New Concordian Shattering.

Port Mohole

Mission Background

Project Mohole is an abandoned American scientific effort to study the Pacific crust near Hawaii by drilling deep into it. The Aidoneus linked Biosopheric Space and Hadean Subspace there, creating a Breakthrough to their ancestral home deep underground. The Superficial World's end of the Breakthrough appears to be an oil platform. Crewed by three caretakers, the platform has fallen into disrepair. The caretakers are Enhanced human guards who protect the bathysphere that links Biospheric Space to the underground city.

Deep below the Surface ocean the bathysphere passes into the borehole and, eventually, reaches the threshold of Hades. Built at that threshold, the construction of Port Mohole is well underway. Basic life support and facilities have already been completed, and construction and engineering crews are able to live onsite 24/7. The center of the vast excavation's ceiling houses Port Mohole's elevator from the Surface. Like everything else in Mohole City, the building is a skeletal affair, utilitarian above all else, but the last phase of construction includes plans for turning the bathysphere port into an opulent Welcome Center to rival the architecture and artistry of America's premier rail stations at their peak. The area around the elevator terminal is honeycombed with housing, drilling and construction sites, and interim life support facilities.

Port Mohole's dominating feature is the Hadean docks: A massive pool of magma, surrounded by a 30 meter tall "sea wall" to protect the city from tidal changes in the pool's height. The docks themselves will be a series of 13 berths surrounding the pool, each with its own massive crane to move vessels over the sea wall and into or out of the the pool. Only Dock 1 (the smallest) is complete, with the others all at varying stages of construction. Dock 1 operates 24/7, receiving and unloading supply ships

HEVA Suits

Hadean Extravehicular Activity Suits are essentially extremely heavy ablative armor around a human-shaped cavity. Spaced throughout the HEVA's structure are numerous small air-supply tanks and heat-dissipation systems. This technology exists as an absolute last-ditch resort for a ship sinking. Once assembled, the suits microweld themselves shut around their occupant, and must be cut out with special industrial torches. As magma is a poor medium for light, each suit is equipped with a kind of high power sonar and visualization system to help its users orient themselves in Hadean space.

Due to the limitations of HEVA's ablative shielding, HEVA suits have a maximum operational lifespan of 90 minutes. After the armor has melted off the wearer suffers the effects of Hadean void exposure.

Their bulkiness imposes a +2 penalty to all dexterity based checks. Works as makeshift body armor, imparting an automatic level of agg soak.

from other Aidoneus outposts in Hadean Space.

Unbeknownst to them, the magma seas deep under Hawaii belongs to others...

Act 1

Covetous Eyes

This prelude begins while Port Mohole is still under construction, but basic life support and facilities have already been finished for the construction and engineering crews. The players should build characters around excuses for them to be present: politicians, financiers, laborers, engineers, scientists, and traders all make sense.

Supply shipments from Hadean Space have consistently failed to arrive at Port Mohole and construction is falling behind schedule. No one knows how or why the ships are vanishing, and the downtime is providing crews around the city time to become unsettled. The player characters have been assigned to crew the Montauk, a hastily modified construction vehicle, whose mission is to investigate the lost ships.

Once the Montauk is away, the first real challenge will be searching the deep magma for traces of the missing ships. Let the players come up with their own ideas for how to begin the search. If they get stuck, suggest looking for debris or derelicts along the planned route. Like the Superficial oceans, the Hadean seas are constantly churning but have distinct currents that would make tracing debris to its source possible. In some ways this is easier in Hades, as mantle material moves very slowly. Don't force the crew to follow your outline if their ideas are more interesting.

Regardless of how the search begins, at a dramatically appropriate moment the Montauk will encounter a rogue current that threatens to smash it against the rocky Hadean threshold. As the crew struggles to right the ship [piloting check, difficulty 8, five successes required —creative use of Formulae makes this easier]. On success they stop the ship from crashing into the surface, but its engines are damaged by the strain. On failure the ship slams into the ceiling, the crew takes 3 points of bashing damage each, and Montauk begins to take on magma. Either way, some (or all) of the crew need to get into EVA gear and leave the ship.

Act 2

Scattered Ashes

Regardless of whether the Montauk sank or not, the crew went EVA using its diving gear. Once they're clear of the Montauk it becomes apparent that the ship was shoved into a debris field. Investigating the debris makes it clear that its bulk is from the remains of several of the missing Aidoneus trade ships. Investigating the current that threw the Montauk with an appropriate skill [Navigation, Geology, Fluid Physics, Greymare, some Arts, etc] reveals some possibilities for next actions. Science skills reveal that the wave was artificial and short range. Xenoscientific means reveal that it was the result of an Unleashing. Both outcomes allow the crew to calculate the trajectory of the wave: its origin is just within their HEVA suits' operational range.

If the crew saved the Montauk they have more options than if it sank. Fortunately, the debris field provides ample supplies for repairing the ship. Leaving or approaching the source without somehow suppressing or disguising the ship's wake will trigger a second attempt to smash the ship.

Act 3

The life of the land is preserved in righteousness

Approaching the source of the waves reveals a massive spherical structure floating deep in Rhyolitic space. Though the drillships' sonar doesn't provide a clear visualization if the crew has another means of remote sensing they'll see a huge bubble floating in the magma—within it is a vast island, watched over by a smoking volcano, and ringed by a sandy beach. Opening the hatch (or cutting each other out of their HEVAs) at the beach, the crew can see the magma lapping up on the shore, retreating, and leaving behind smoking obsidian sands. In the distance, where a lush forest begins, they can see a huge thatch longhouse.

Pele and The Hi'iaka

In the mythic age Nāmaka and Pele's earth-shaking battle ended with Pele's body broken at her sister's feet. Nāmaka's victory was a hollow one. Though she had destroyed Pele's material form, Pele was something like an Inanimae and her spirit retreated back to the lava pools under the island their battle had created. Surrounded by the deep fire that creates and destroys land, Pele was finally safe. Legend has it that Pele's resting place is in the heart of Kilauea, where she and her household (mostly made up of other members of her divine family) oversee different aspects of the Hawaiian world.

Pele's recuperation is attended by a family of changelings called The Hi'iaka. The Hi'iaka are Pele's forty sisters who tend the Hawaiian islands during Pele's convalescence. Their appearances, mortal bodies, and Arts are diverse. Some take shamanistic roles healing the people and protecting their dreams, others work to restore the lands, skies, and seas, while still others are warriors who protect Hawaii from the dangers of the World of Darkness.

If the crew approaches the hale, a strong young Hawaiian woman emerges carrying a spade. She addresses the interlopers from the sea. Hi'iaka is motivated by a desire to protect her sister's convalescing body, and sees Port Mohole (and by extension the crew) as a plot by Namaka to create a path from her oceans into Pele's realm. How confrontational she is will depend upon several factors: how carelessly the Port Mohole Countless have been pursuing their project, how distressed the Hawaiian islands have become in your version of the World of Darkness, and how the crew approach her.

Closing Questions

This mission is more open ended than many of the others. How it closes will depend on large part how upset Hi'iaka is with the crew and Port Mohole. If the crew manages to convince her that they are not working on Namaka's behalf, the question of how to address Hi'iaka's core concern (that Namaka might use Mohole as a way to reach Pele and finish her off) remains. If the crew offends Hi'iaka (or tries to resolve their conflict through force) Hi'iaka is an extremely powerful combatant. She wields a small cache of Treasures (her lightning skirt, her lei made from chimerical flowers with a variety of powers, and Pele's holy pa'oa) and has an array of Arts and Realms linked to the weather, fertility, and fate. In the mortal world, Hi'iaka is a force of nature—in Pele's Palace she is nigh unstoppable.

Reality, Augmented

Mission Background

Join the Fight!

Install HuntersAugment! and transform your world. Take back the streets from dangerous Lycanthropes. Protect your fellow Citizens from mind control by insidious Vampires and Ghosts. You are the bulwark against armies of chaotic Wizards and Faeries. Choose your prey and join the fight!

Welcome to the world of the Augmented. The fate of this world (and perhaps others) depends upon you. Downloading HuntersAugment! and attaching the Zed scanner peripheral allows you to use your mobile phone to peer into the invisible world of supernatural predators. Form taskforces with your friends to fight reality deviants, earn rewards, and take down ever more dangerous enemies!

The World is Your Game!

A Breakthrough in Augmented Reality gaming!
HuntersAugment! turns your phone into a window into the unseen world of the Night People—Abominations that live to feed on normal people and disrupt our lives. Using your phone's camera and GPS, HuntersAugment!'s proprietary procedural content generation algorithm, The Director, is capable of delivering an endlessly varied narrative experience. Want to spend 30 minutes nullifying Wizards on your commute (by bus)? You can! Want to spend a day in the woods with your friends hunting terrifying Lycanthropes? You can! Stuck at a boring museum on a field trip? Hunt the Faeries and Ghosts who prey on children and weak-willed Citizens.

Requirements:

HuntersAugment! Requires a smartphone capable of running Gynoid Quench or greater, or AppletreeOS 16 or greater. Nobody uses Windows Phone. Unlocked and Jailbroken phones are not compatible with HuntersAugment!. Presence of a GPS-spoofing app will cause HuntersAugment! to fail.

Smartphone must be paired with the Zed Scanner Peripheral and have stable data connection for many features to function as intended. Credit card required to purchase Zed Scanner Peripheral & for in-game microtransactions. Carrier charges for data usage may apply.

Players must be 13 years of age or older (European Economic Area), 16 years of age or older or have a parent's consent (United States), or meet appropriate age of consent laws in their home communities.

Children may not play HuntersAugment!

—Promotional Materials for HuntersAugment! from Avalon Toys, now in open beta test

Act 1

Murder Simulator

The crew's mentor (or patron) has been driven into Dormancy, yet no one knows which chimera or Countless might be responsible. Depending upon the type of Mission you (and your players) would like this to be, here is an opportunity to create a Clue-style mystery. Once they're about to solve the murder (or perhaps after if you want to turn the screws), the crew comes upon a second victim in early Dormancy.

Scene: Leaving a bar, a crewmember (or the whole group of them) happens upon one of their Countless contacts (extra points if they're a recurring character), passed out in the gutter. Cursory investigation reveals that they're not drunk. Their Holographic form is completely absent, indicating their Dormancy. They remain unconscious for 24 hours. A proper medical investigator (either Medical or Investigation checks at standard difficulty) will notice that the victim died of Holographic injuries, not Hostility. This implies that the killer is still out there.

Act 2

Think of the Children

A panic is rising among the local Countless, and a general assembly has been called. If someone doesn't figure out what's going on soon the various crews will be at each others' necks. During the course of the assembly Alice, a Collectivist Chirurgeon, volunteers to evacuate newly Implanted Countless "for their own safety". The Prophets of Harmony take this as a sign that she's in league with the murderer, and weapons are drawn.

The moment the firefight should begin out a human breaks in to the assembly. She has her phone out and appears to be taking pictures of the Countless there.

"There are so many faeries here! Get in here!" she yells.

She waves her phone in an arc in front of her, emitting a wave of Holographic energy that forces everyone hit by it away from her. Two more teenagers enter, both with their phones out.

The humans are fundamentally invulnerable to Holographic powers, just like every other unmodified human. Holographic powers do work on the Augmented's Holographic powers, as does Grounding. The crew is not meant to "win" this encounter, but cleverness should be rewarded. Dowsing (standard difficulty) reveals that the humans are completely mundane. Dowsing (difficulty 8) shows that the humans smartphones are Devices. Five or more successes at the

Accounts Conflict:

Can Augmented Harm the other Inhumans?

Changelings are subject to Banality and Glamour, two forces that mortals are capable of manipulating with no outside help whatsoever. The "game" is a piece of Holographic technology that mediates humans' interactions with the Holographic Universe, allowing them to "see" Inhumans' hidden selves through the app as well as converting the players' intent to harm (IE: using in-game offensive skills and items) into Holographic effects.

It might be interesting to use Augmented as enemies who have been empowered with Technocratic (rather than Chimerical or Holographic) technology. In that case, HuntersAugment! could be a threat to other Night Folk.

higher difficulty reveals that the phones are not Devices, but that the code they're running is.

Falling Action One: The Crew Flees or Loses

Either after fleeing or being overcome and needing to wait for a ReEmergence the Crew meets up to go over the catastrophic outcome of the general assembly.

Falling Action Two: The Crew Incapacitates or Kills At Least One Augmented

Using any Surface effecting ability (including mundane ones) on the Augmented works as expected. The Augmented will be suitably shocked by "monsters in a phone game" doing whatever they did (hurling a table at them, punching one of them, using a Superficial Formula, etc). Using a supernatural power provokes Anthropic Hostility as normal. Assume the Augmented have a usual Hostility level of 7 (they're knocked into a two-week coma by their Hostility, and their memories of the event are disbelieved as dream-like hallucinations).

If the Augmented are incapacitated (or killed) the Crew needs to decide what to do about that. Despite their ability to wield powerful Holographic abilities, these are adolescent humans. If incapacitated, the possibility of them remembering something dangerous when they emerge from their comas exists. If killed, the Crew may be responsible for bringing human scrutiny the local Countless may not survive.

Act 3

Confronting Big Games

Regardless of how the last Act resolved, the immediate problem remains: the Augmented are being used to hunt the Countless. First priority (if the Crew didn't obtain one during Act 2) is to get one of the Augmented smartphones to figure out what's going on. The phones are normal, apart from being attached to a peculiar peripheral. A Technology, Xenotechnology, or related Knowledge check at standard difficulty reveals that it's a Xenotechnological scanner, capable

Hunter Tactics

The first human will hold her action to use Holographic energy waves to push back any Countless who approach the group. The second will snipe anything he deems a high-value target (Countless or chimera who look threatening or who manage to land a hit on the team). The third stays close to the other two, weilding a Holographic spear and shield to defend his team-mates.

Note: These three teenagers are unmodified humans. Striking them with Holographic attacks does no real damage. Surface attacks and Surface Formulae work as expected. All of their Holographic abilities seem to originate from their phones. If, for some reason, one of them loses their phone they lose their Holographic abilities.

Their only unique features are their Holographic abilities and the capacity to Anathema Ground incoming Surface effects.

of taking measurements of Holographic phenomenon. A Computer check at standard difficulty will show that the HunterAugment! App has the ability to manipulate Zed in crude, but powerful, ways. While the phones are charging, the code draws down massive amounts of electricity, filters it for trace amounts of Zed, and charges the peripheral with the highly Irradiated ZPE the Augmented power their "Formulae" with.

What the Crew decides to do with this knowledge is up to them, but provides multiple avenues to pursue:

An extended Computer check that achieves 15 or more successes is needed to decompile the app. This reveals that the app relies on a xenotech Device that it accesses via the cellular network. Disrupting an Augmented phone's connection to the network nullifies the user's Holographic powers.

Without decompiling the app, tracing its development is a simple Research check (5 successes) reveals that the company that created the app (Avalon Toys) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Pentex.

Red Star, Fall!

Mission Background

This prelude starts in the Last Horizon, though the player characters don't know it. Setting is a beautiful, clean, version of Rio De Janeiro just this side of the technological singularity. Everything has a certain 1970's future asthetic--buildings are built on curves from steel, plastic, and glass. Mass transit is effective, reliable, and clean. The streets are safe and the worst crime is typically pickpocketing (a weird crime, considering that money was abolished). People only do the work they like doing-- everything else is taken care of by machines. Every couple of blocks has a Replimart: a combination grocery store/automat where hyper-advanced matter printers process a variety of raw materials (protein paste, for example) into on-demand foods and consumer products. Nobody wants for anything, and life is extremely pleasant.

Act 1

Stain the Eath

The party are all attending a football match at the Maracanã Stadium. 30 minutes into the game, a red star appears in the daytime-sky. People wonder at it, but nobody is worried because the United Earth Defense Comission would know if it were dangerous.

35 minutes into the game the red star has grown large enough to eclipse the Sun. People begin to become worried. Just as folks begin to head home, it smashes into the stadium. Though they don't know it yet, the Anthropic Tidal Event has reached them. A wave of Unmaking tears through the stadium's reality--people, animals, and things are torn apart. Wherever the players go, they end up getting sucked into a "hole" made of the same red light and lose consciousness.

They regain consciousness in on a ruined Maracanã pitch. The stadium looks like its been in a state of ruin for years. Shadows move among the debris, but the crew can't get them to come out of the shadows. (If they manage some particularly clever act of magic or trickery, the shadows are cast by homeless people who have been squatting in the ruins).

The most important element here is the "hole" that lead them here. It's a Breakthrough from the Surface to their home Echo in the Last Horizon. (Unless someone manages more than 5 successes on a Xenoscience check to analyze it don't tell them that. Reasonable success should only reveal that it's a portal connecting their home with this place, not the nature of the two ends of the portal).

If/When the players head out to investigate this post-apocalyptic Rio, go nuts. They're in the standard World of Darkness version of Rio. Use maps and embellish things to make them exactly as shitty as they need to be. The earlier setting of Ideal Rio is a useful counterpoint here for drawing comparisons. While you're describing Real Rio, try to frame things in language that a modern person might use to describe the distant past: "This disease was wiped out years ago", "That person is doing a toilet in the gutter, maybe they don't have sewers yet?", "You remember that this ruin was knocked down to build your apartment block", etc.

However you go about it lead the players to two Act goals:

1) They need to create a way to "stabilize" the hole in reality so they can travel home. Whether this is giving them a mission to earn enough XP so someone can buy the Wayfare Cantrip that opens Trods, helping them build a Device that opens Trods, or helping them find and modify a Translocator Pad is up to you and the players.

2) Along the way, they need to encounter events and/or news that strongly implies that Real Rio is an alternate future for Ideal Rio. Suggestions include: Evidence of the Amazon burning (choking smog, people in the city explaining the smog), oil spills along the beaches, evidence of government corruption, and/or gang warfare in the streets. News items on newspapers, radios, tvs, etc including: Australia burning, Russian and American efforts to drill for oil in the arctic, China's ridiculously high carbon output, smog problems in major cities, etc (shouldn't be hard to mine the real world news for any of these items). Pick a theme and assign a WoD antagonist/ antagonist group to be at the head of these problems.

Act 2

Change the Future!

When the crew finally returns home, things are bad. The Tidal Event has decimated Ideal Rio--Chunks of the city simply do not exist. Rather than yawning voids, describe it in terms of things being missing: the crew turns down and alley and are immediately on the next street having crossed none of the space inbetween, one of the crew goes to check on their family only to discover that the space their apartment building (which used to be sandwiched between two other apartment blocks) used to occupy isn't there and the two neighboring buildings are awkwardly abutting each other, etc. Worse still, the friends, neighbors, coworkers, family, etc that the crew used to associate with have no idea that anything has changed or is wrong. To them, Ideal Rio has always been this way and the crew are the ones acting strangely. If the crew pushes the issue hard enough the locals become aggressive (but won't start a fight) and, somehow, backup always seems to appear and interrupt the scene.

However is appropriate for the crew and the story, make "normal" life in Ideal Rio distressing enough for the crew that they decide to go back to "Past" Rio and fix things. Plan a series of scenes that revolve around the crew addressing the WoD antagonist(s) you established previously as behind the terrible things ruining Real Rio. Try to use the holes as much as possible as a means for the crew to travel to their epic confrontations with their foes. It's okay if some of these missions take place in World of Darkness Prime (IE: not traveling through a Breakthrough), but it's important for most of them to happen in Echoes. Though Real Rio is "the past" to the crew, it's the present to the World of Darkness timeline and the crew is from a discarded future timeline. By attempting to change "the past", the crew is creating myriad additional discarded histories in the Last Horizon (this is where the "holes" (Breakthroughs) are really leading them).

Act 3

But the Future Refused to Change...

After the crew's suitably climactic battle with whoever the Big Bad ends up being, they return Home, where everything is lovely. Ideal Rio's integrity has been restored, and the Unmade things have (mostly) returned. If they aren't suspicious of this, let the story end there. The crew can have a happy ending with questionmarks if they want one.

Let them investigate if they are suspicious. As they dig, their family, friends, and coworkers become aggrevated and hostile, trying to discourage them, similar to when they were interrogating the Unmade parts of Ideal Rio previously. At an appropriate moment, allow them to return to the arena. There they discover the Breakthrough back to Surface Reality, which remains unchanged. Every enemy they fought in Surface Reality (IE: didn't travel through a Breakthrough to reach) remains defeated, but societal problems aren't solved by removing a single actor. Eliminating gang bosses usually causes a new power player to emerge. Getting corrupt politicians arrested doesn't stop politicians from becoming corrupt. Killing the head of Nestle doesn't force governments to actually regulate the companies that are destroying the planet. Trying to change the timeline to accept their discarded future as the real future doesn't make the crew real.

Depending upon how tragic you, and the players, want this story to be it can end with the crew realizing that they'd failed. Or it can end with them realizing the greater truth (that fighting individual bad actors doesn't fix systemic problems) and triggering self-Hostility. Or it can end with them realizing that they (and Ideal Rio) aren't real--the tremendous amount of self-Hostility this triggers will close the Breakthrough and (presumably) Unmake Ideal Rio, possibly Unmaking the crew as well. Only use this last ending if some of the players want to reroll and make new characters (allowing the players who don't want to reroll to survive their Unmaking by becoming proper Countless (perhaps with elevated Irradiation levels to compensate for their higher power level as experienced characters)).

Devices and Relics

"Raw... boot? What that?
No rubbish or Ayla head explode."
"A robot is a machine made to look like a man."

—Ayla & Robo, Chrono Trigger

Devices are equipment built by the Earthbound Countless. They can affect Superficial Reality, Holographic Reality, or sometimes both [noted by the Holographic-Only and Surface-Only tags]. Each Device has a background point cost [noted in brackets], short description of its use and purpose, and its systematized qualities. Holographic-Only Devices can affect Superficial Reality if they're activated while their user is in Xenoform. Surface-Only Devices only affect Surface targets and may never affect purely Holographic material.

Relics are a special category of Devices that predate Tidal Event and are usually capable of feats thought impossible. Owning a Relic is a mark of status among the Countless, but confers no benefits other than having access to its unique abilities. Characters without at least a point of Status (or a similar background) may have difficulty proving or establishing legal ownership of Relics.

Derez Disc [1]

Holographic-Only

The most commonly seen material to form the basis of Deresolution Discs is the iconic AOL trial CD, though they can be made from any shovelware's physical media. These Devices are imprinted with a symbolic link to their owner's Icon, which carves a simulacrum of their Icon on the surface of the disc. Thrown Derez Discs function identically to a boomerang. Their knife-sharp edges allows them to embed in solid matter, but their Holographic nature imparts a different effect on living things. When a Derez Disc hits a living target it disrupts their ability to process information and instantly returns to its owner's hand. Due to this pacifying effect, Derez Discs are most commonly utilized by Digital Native peacekeeping forces.

System: Standard Firearms roll. Rate 1. Damage: 1 [difficulty 1, chimerical lethal].

Special: +1 difficulty to all skill checks for the duration of the scene, stacks with itself.

Note: Anthropic Hostility prevents Derez-Discs used in the presence of unmodified humans from functioning correctly unless their user is in Xenoform.

Entanglement Pool [3]

From the vast distances between outposts in the Heavens, to the opaque fluids of Hades, to the ever-shifting nature of the Shadow, all Subspatial cultures had to solve the problem of how to communicate between outposts. Applications of Field Theory produced the most common solution to these difficulties: Entanglement Pools. These mirrors are made from metallic superfluids, specially prepared to easily accept Field entanglements. Each mirror has a unique code that is used to attune other Pools.

Though there was very limited cross-culture contact before the Earthbinding, the largest Subspatial Empires maintained official Realmwide directories of every registered Entanglement pool's spin codes. Additionally, politicians, thieves, and pirates kept encrypted "phone books" of their contacts' and allies' Pools. Though most modern UFOs rely on human technology for communicating locally, Entanglement Pools have distinct benefits and are highly sought-after Relics.

System: Once two (or more) Pools are "dialed in" to each others' spin codes, whatever image is reflected on the surface of one Pool is displayed on the other(s). Entanglement Pools can be "dialed out" by changing their transmitting setting to random (and hopefully unused) spins, but they can never be turned off.

Force Spear [4]

Holographic-Only

The force spear's creation is attributed to Captain Keen and commonly used by Free Dream Voidsailors out of 'Tłisukdakain. A versatile tool, the force spear most resembles a screw-driver's handle. A small fingerprint reader is situated at the top of the handle. When it reads its owner's thumbprint, a force spear will fire a lancing energy beam. The beam has minor guidance, and will seek the intended target around cover.

System: Standard Firearms roll [Dexterity + Firearms, difficulty 6]. Rate 1. Damage 4 [difficulty 6, chimerical lethal].

Special: Ignores up to 2 points of cover bonus.

Holographic Suppressor [1 - 5]

Surface-Only

By emulating the Formulae Oppies use to craft their Facades Holographic Suppressors can cover up a Countless' physical Tells.

System: Each background point spent on this device disguises one Tell as a completely normal human feature.

Light Bender [2]

Personal light benders are a derivative of the technology behind Undefined Fantastic Objects' active cloaking. PLBs protect a person from detection by purely human means. They don't render the user invisible, but they come close. Casual observation is foiled by light benders, but prolonged scrutiny can overcome the effect.

System: Identical to Veiled Eyes cantrip (*Changeling: 20th Anniversary Edition* pg. 200)

Login Dongle [3]

Surface-Only

These Devices resemble standard USB WiFi antenna. Countless use these wondrous machines to to create Breakthroughs to Digital Subspace. The login Breakthrough stays open for just an instant, long enough to draw anyone physically touching the computer's UI devices (keyboard, monitor, mouse, trackball, etc) into the associated System. The creatures or objects translated to the target System can return to Analog Reality through any operational Dongle linked to the same System. Given the massive time difference between Digital Subspace and the Surface, the point of entry is almost always the point of egress. Without very high level Chronos (or another Device that emulates specific Formulae), these Devices have very limited use.

System: User attaches the Dongle to a computer and spends a point of Zed to activate the Breakthrough to Digital Subspace. Every Login Dongle is permanently attached to one (and only one) Freehold in Digital Subspace. The Countless's main outpost in Digital Subspace is the SV3F System, though others likely exist.

Neural Disruptor [4]

Holographic-Only

The Neural Disruptor is a weapon commonly used by Progrades and spies when their mission objective is to capture rather than kill. These Devices resemble a wrist, arm, and shoulder brace with a copper pad in the palm.

System: Brawl attacks made with a Disrupter deal 3 points of Aggravated Holographic damage.

System Icon [5]

Surface-Only

Discovering Digital Subspace prompted a flurry of invention and creativity. The incredible temporal distortions present within Digital Reailty meant that the early pioneers necessarily held multiple doctorates in the Practice of Chronos and the Theory of Sapiology. The First Wave's pioneers colonized the SV3F System, isolated its specific clockspeed, and crafted the first System Icons to promote Countless Digital migration and settlement.

Crafted with complicated Formulae derived from Chronos 5 and Saining 5 (and, of course, Sapiology), each Icon can only bestow its unique powers onto its intended owner. Once attached to their intended user's voile, Icons become a part of their Holographic appearance. To those with Xenoperception Icons appear to be beautiful (or ugly, depending upon the skill of the craftsman) piece of jewelry or wearable tech. In any Realm but Digital Subspace, this is the extent of the Icon's powers.

When the wearer enters Digital Subspace their perceptions and actions speed up to the System clockspeed, allowing them to behave normally while there. Without a System Icon or the ability to use powerful Chronos Formulae, Surface dwellers in Digital Subspace experiences crippling time dilation.

Uhlenbeck Compactor [3]

Holographic-Only or Surface-Only

Invented by an industrious Kite, these Devices have come to be viewed as something of a necessity on Earth. Applying the both the work of human physicists and Countless Fermion Sculpters this device compresses space, in essence creating a pocket in which a single hand-held item can be stored. Countless utilize Uhlenbeck compactors to secret away a wide range of small items including weapons, hard drives, batteries, food, tools, and clothing. Uhlenbeck Compactor Devices are either Holographic-Only or Surface-Only. The Holographic-Only variety have the benefit of being completely invisible to unmodified humans, while the Surface-Only version takes the form of an accessory worn on the hand or wrist (typically rings, gloves, or bracelets).

System: Uhlenbeck Compactor Devices can be used to store one hand-held item on the user's person as long as that item is not connected to or otherwise a part of another item. (A bust would fit in the compactor, but the head of a life-sized statue would need to be separated from the statue by other means first). Items stored in the compactor (jokingly referred to as "being in hammerspace") have no weight and are imperceptible without active scanning (Auspex, certain Spheres, Kenning/Dowsing checks). Items can be stored or withdrawn at will by the owner. Putting a second item into an in-use Compactor ejects the first. Storing and retrieving items takes an action, and may provoke Anthropic Hostility in certain situations.

Xenoscanner [3]

Surface-Only

One of the most commonly carried Devices, Holographic scanners (more often referred to as Xenoscanners) help the Countless notice and isolate Subspatial incursions into Biospheric Space. Usually disguised as common communication devices (pagers, smartphones, walkie-talkies, civilian-band radios, etc), Xenoscanners include complex Holographic technology and that Countless activate and interact with via their Holographic bodies. Abducted technicians may be equipped with Xenoscanners that have been modified to accomodate their particular disabilty.

System: Using a Xenoscanner adds one automatic success to all Dowsing rolls. Unmodified humans can make Kenning/ Dowsing checks untrained if they have access to a Xenoscanner.

Zed Mine [1-5]

Holographic-Only

The Zero Point Energy Mine (or more commonly Zed Mine) is a victim-activated concealed Zed bomb and is widely reguarded as the least welcome contribution to the Holographic Universe by the Countless so far. Concordians (and presumably other changeling groups) quickly reverse engineered their own version of this atrocity.

This Device reflects the most common version of the Zed Mine. Others include the Concordian Dragon Fire Mines (linked proximity mines that all trigger when any one is activated), and the anti-Mer Harbor's Tears (floating torpedoes used to defend harbors and other oceanic installations). Rumours of a Superficial version of this weapon abound, but if someone is producing them, they haven't yet been deployed.

System: Deploying a Zed Mine requires a Stealth check [difficulty 5 + the mine's rating] to hide it and a Security check [difficulty 7] to safely activate it. Failure on the Security roll leaves the mine (unknown to the technician) deactivated. Botching triggers the mine's destructive payload. Detecting a Zed Mine's trigger requires a Dowsing check [difficulty 5 + successes from deployment Stealth check]. Disarming the mine requires a Security check [difficulty 5 + rating]. Failure on the Security roll leaves the mine (unknown to the technician) armed. Botching triggers the mine's destructive payload.

When the victim trips the proximity sensor (typically a Holographic pressure plate, though other triggers have been used) the bomb expels a blast of raw Zed into the vicinity. Roll a number of lethal Holographic damage dice equal to the mine's rating [1-5]. Everyone (including unmodified humans) within Space 1 range is affected. Unmodified humans, though unaffected by Holographic damage, experience an uncontrolled emotion (such as rage, sorrow, confusion, giddiness, etc). Which emotion is up to the Storyteller, but it should always be extremely inconvenient for the one(s) who tripped the mine.

Merits and Flaws

. . . clumsiness is often mated with a love of solitude.

— Virginia Woolf, Orlando

Blackbox Implant [4 Point Flaw]

Viewed as a normal part of modern Joining procedures, most Countless have a blackbox implant. These Devices allow the chirurgeon who implanted them (and by extension that chirurgeon's patrons) to more easily monitor the resulting Countless' movements. Originally designed to facilitate the transition from Forced to Natural Emergence Joinings, authorities among the two major Allegiances found another use for them. Both the Prophets of Harmony and the Symbiosis Collective have officers dedicated to maintaining orthodoxy among the ranks who make use of these tracking devices. Countless who fail to support their Allegiance's mission objectives mysteriously find themselves visited by Prograde enforcers.

System: Agents who have access to the Countless' Blackbox Spin Codes get an automatic success on all Perception, Investigation, and Research checks to locate that Countless.

Forced Emergence [5 Point Flaw]

Despite copious evidence that Forced Emergence compromises the long-term viability of the Joined being, it is not an uncommon practice today. Most Countless victims of Forced Emergence are First Wave Joined, though modern chirurgeons have a variety of reasons (some would say excuses) to continue the practice: Because there is no Dormancy following Implantation no effort needs to be spent tracking the Retrograde, the Countless within was identified as a high-ranking person or had important information from Subspace, it was an unexpected or emergency Implantation and the chirurgeon didn't have a tracking implant on hand, etc.

System: Whenever a character who was subjected to Forced Emergence would gain one point of Radiation, they instead gain two.

Microgravity Acrobat [5 Point Merit]

Through exposure and training this character is capable of maneuvering through Gravity Conditions typically found in Voidspace with no difficulty.

System: Ignore the negative effects of Microgravity and Low Gravity Conditions.

Nonconformist*[1, 3, or 7 Point Flaw]

Silicate or Oppy Only

Either by virtue of being guided through your First Emergence by unqualified trainers (or no trainers), simple incomprehension on your part, or an active rejection of human norms, you do not understand how your Host "should" behave. Your actions, words, and/or manner of dress flagrantly violate human society's unspoken (and sometimes spoken) rules for how a human of your appearance (including gender, race, age, class, and many other attributes) should be. For their part other Countless don't care. Humans' reaction to this flaw can be severe.

System: Countless with this flaw simply do not understand how to avoid attracting (usually negative) human attention. Any skill checks that require social grace (most Subterfuge and Etiquette checks and some Expression checks) or subtlety (Stealth rolls for blending into a crowd) automatically fail when applied to unmodified humans. How well Abducted humans react to the nonconformist's attempts at mixing will depend upon the individual (and how willing they may be to "humor" the Countless).

As always, player and storyteller judgment plays a role in determining just how much of an impact this flaw has—even some unmodified humans might extend more grace to certain nonconformists than expected. A gender nonconformist might have no trouble navigating certain LGBT spaces, but still have significant trouble with others. Just how difficult a nonconformist's life will be is reflected by the point value of this flaw. A 1 point nonconformist should expect to be unable to productively interact with a specific class of people (people belonging to a minority religion, children, women, animal lovers). A 3 point nonconformist will fail to interact with most majority members (Christian-leaning people in the US/Hindu-leaning people in India, white people in white-majority countries, men generally) due to their quirks. A 7 point nonconformist will put off all but the most permissive unmodified humans and cause (unintentionally!) serious trouble for their crew.

Ubiquitous Anathema [7 Point Flaw]

Some Anathemata are so omnipresent that a significant part of your character's attention in any scene is dedicated to avoiding it. You might be an Abyssal whose informing Dream revolves around the seas being healthy and diverse whose Anathema is plastic shopping bags, a Silicate whose Anathema is phones below 30% battery, an Ancestor whose Dream is for all animals to live freely and treats pets as an Anathema, or an Oppy who is harmed by the presence of flat Earthers.

As with standard Anathemata, the Storyteller is the final arbiter of what is and isn't a Ubiquitous Anathema.

Sci-Fi Bunks

So bounce the graviton particle beam
Off the main deflector dish
That's the way we do things, lad
Making shit up as we wish!
—Voltaire, "The U.S.S. Make Shit Up"

Satellite from days of old, lead me to your access code
—Ed, "Cowboy Bebop"

The Formulae utilized by the Countless are only superficially different to the Cantrips of the Changelings. The Countless might couch discussions in pseudo-scientific vocabulary like "Zero Point Energy" and "Radiation" and "the Universe", but they're really talking about Glamour, Banality, and the Dreaming in ways that make sense for their Paradigm.

Where actual science is a very regimented process for understanding the ways reality behaves, sci-fi science is frequently a stand-in for breaking the laws of reality in unpredictable ways (AKA: magic). The Countless are born from the same dreams that gave us science fantasies like *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* and political science fictions like *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri* and *Dune*.

Countless Formulae are magic dressed up in science drag, but don't let that fool you—their Formulae can be as wild and imaginative as a traditional changeling's. Arcadian changelings might chafe and complain about the Banality of a teleporter pad versus a trod gate, but unless a Formula's bunk bumps into a changeling's Triggers the conflict exists for narrative purposes only.

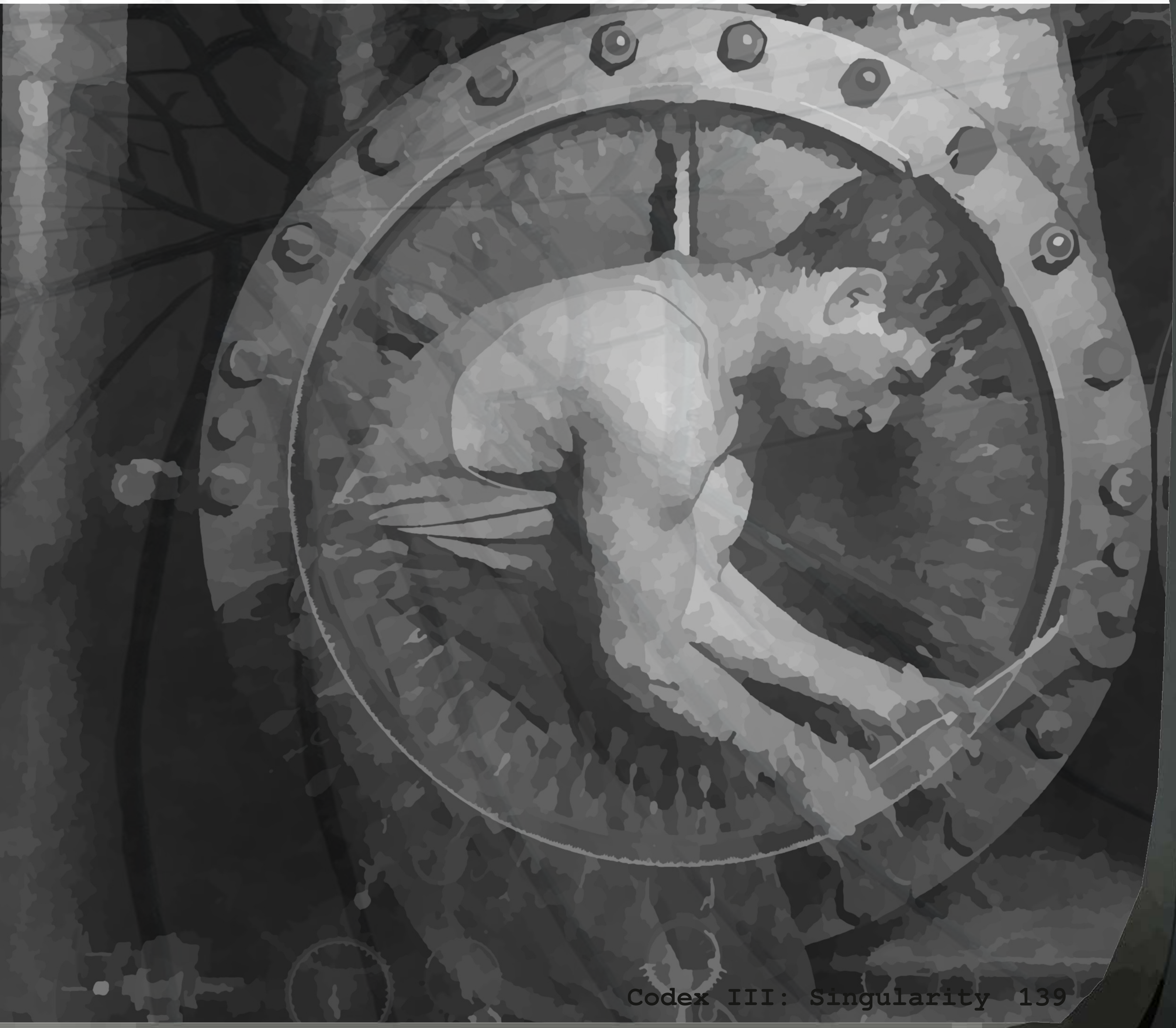
Systemwise, using "magic" is exactly the same for a Countless player and a vanilla Changeling player. They both construct a Bunk, select a Realm, and pay whatever costs are associated with the action. Most of the differences come in flavor of the Bunk—a Concordian might sing a little lymerick as their Bunk for Hopscotch while a Countless would could build some antigrav boots, or activate their jetpack, or power up their cybernetic vertical acceleration enhancers.

Common (same round, no bonus) Bunks include: MacGyvering just the right trinket together from a human's watch, realigning the deflector array, using someone else's laptop to hack the system, firing a weapon, scanning the object.

Involved (minimum 1 human inconvenienced, up to -3 difficulty to Formula roll) Bunks include: Spending a day building exactly the right device for the situation, replacing all of the burnt out shield emitters, writing a new kernel from scratch, modding a weapon to produce a new effect, performing an hours-long multiphasic analysis of the object.

Epic (minimum 30 humans inconvenienced, -5 difficulty to Formula roll) Bunks include: Spending months researching the problem and inconveniencing dozens of grad students by monopolizing the uni physics lab before finally emerging with a solution, building new shield emitters from components, writing your own custom OS, recruiting a dozen technicians to help analyze and disassemble the object.

If you're still at a loss for what might make a good sci-fi Bunk looking at the Procedures used by technomancers in the *Mage: the Ascension* technocratic convention books can help give you an idea of what superscience on the bleeding edge of reality looks like in the World of Darkness.



Readymade Characters

That princely woman...
thrice noble and virtuous
but somewhat fantastical and original-minded.
– Charles Lamb

Nunnehi Engineering Genius

Name(s): Captain Keen, Hohoeapbess, Kate Miller; **Allegiance**: 'Tłisukdakain; **Family**: Thought Crafter; **Seeming**: Childing; **Legacies**: Summer Maker/ Midseason Watcher/Winter Witch

Attributes: Str 2; Dex 4; Sta 2; Cha 1; Man 3; App 2; Per 3; Int 4; Wit 3

Talents: Alertness 2; Brawl 1* Dowsing 3

Skills: Crafts (Woodwork) 2; Crafts (Weaving) 2; Crafts (Metalwork) 2; Firearms 1; Leadership 2; Pilot 4*; Survival 2

Knowledges: Academics (Astronautic Engineering) 1; Computer 3; Investigation 1; Linguistics 3*; Politics 2

Practices: Pyretics 1, Spring 2

Theories: Fermion Sculpting 1, Sapiology 2, Holography 2

Tempers: Medicine 5, Willpower 5*, Banality 3

Backgrounds: Incomplete Kodiak [4], Retinue [1], Device: Force Spear [4]*, Device: Uhlenbeck Compactor [3]*

Languages: English, Makah, Pyrean Script

Notes [Mortal]: At about five and a half feet tall Kate, has the build of a person who spends a huge part of their life on long-distance hiking trips. They keep their light-brown hair cropped short and usually wear old baseball caps. A better planner than most, their backpack has almost everything one would need in it, from a light laptop and spare batteries, to bandages and snacks.

After high school Kate attended the University of Michigan's engineering program. The transition from home to university was difficult for her--not only were her family and friends half-way across the country, she found that many concepts she'd already learned were referred to and taught in completely different ways, and others were disregarded entirely. She resented the times that she had something to contribute, only to be shut down because the way she expressed the idea wasn't couched in "properly technical" terminology and thought. Determined to prove them wrong, Kate graduated magna cum laude.

If the transition from home to university was hard, the transition from university to home was brutal. After all that work fitting in to the culture at university, home felt backwards. Going somewhere else was out of the question, but she was irritable, out of place, and probably depressed. That changed when she visited the Ozette Village excavation site. Years later, Keen would reflect that Kate had internalized a lot of the disrespect she'd got from her classmates and teachers at university.

Notes [Changeling]: The legendary Captain Keen is shorter than you'd expect. Despite their active lifestyle, long voyages in microgravity have left them with a somewhat stretched, gaunt, appearance. They are never without their trusty force spear, voidsuit, and excursion-grade Uhlenbeck Compactor. Keen personally built all of their own equipment, from their Compactor all the way up to the Kodiak itself. They tend away from the gray-plastic space-future aesthetic of standard Countless equipment. Where there is no need for heavier protection, Keen prefers to wear her voidsuit's inner layer instead of more usual clothing. This inner insulating layer is made from polyurethane treated cedar fiber. The weave features patterns that depict scenes of adventure on the void's currents. The woven art channels power to the full suit's life support system. Their full voidsuit adds additional layers of protective plating and life support equipment. The outermost section is made of overlapping yellow cedar plates. Like scales, each lacquered plate is bent to conform to the human shape underneath it, giving the suit the texture of a bird or fish. Both the zero suit and the full voidsuit have a place to belt on their Uhlenbeck Compactor--a snuff-box sized container made from lacquered red cedar, capable of storing any one hand-held object.

Keen's Chrysalis came late in life (at least as far as changelings reckon "late in life"). After she finished her bachelor's in engineering at the University of Michigan Kate returned home to northwestern Washington. Kate's aunt brought them along as part of the joint Makah/University of Washington archeological expedition to the newly discovered Ozette Village site. For Kate it was an Earth-shattering experience. She'd always heard the stories about how the Makah used to live, but that history never really felt present before. Seeing a pre-colonization Makah village being excavated from the Earth woke up… something she wasn't sure what in her. For the first time in a long time she felt like she fit into a place in history, and from there she could see the path into her future. Hohoeapbess's innovative streak melded with Kate's technical education and produced a genius who was able to break through to Subspace.

Things didn't go to plan. Now known mostly as Keen, and sometimes as Hohoeapbess, Keen has the Kodiak, a fantastic (if incomplete) Voidship, an excursion base on the near-Earth asteroid 'Tłisukdakain, and a new changeling family.

Celestial Project Manager

Name(s): Tritium, Violetta Cavendish; **Allegiance**: Prophets of Harmony; **Clade(Species)**: Kite(Celestial); **Motion**: Prograde; **Caste/Legacy**: Functionary/Transhumanist

Attributes: Str 2; Dex 3; Sta 1; Cha [Wheeling & Dealing] 4; Man [Promoting Corporate Goals] 5; App 1; Per 1; Int 3; Wit 4 [Project Management]

Talents: Empathy 3, Expression 3*, Intimidation 2, Leadership [Delegation] 4*, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken (Birds) 1, Firearms 2, Etiquette [Boardrooms] 4*, Performance 3

Knowledges: Law [Finance] 4*, Politics 2

Practices: Contracts 2, Metamorphosis 1*, Naming 1

Theories: Fermion Sculpting 1, Sapiology 2*, Holography 3

Tempers: Zed 4, Ego 4, Radiation 3

Backgrounds: Resources 4, Rank [Prophets of Harmony] 3*, Technicians 2*

Languages: English

Merits/Flaws: Forced Emergence [5]

Notes [Host]: Like almost everything else about her, Violetta carefully composes her appearance before any public or business appointment. Her deep red hair refuses to be anything but curly and unruly, inspiring her impressive collection of hats. She favors business attire, either well-fitted suits or dresses and jackets. Her make-up is subtle but omnipresent and emphasizes her strong cheeks and draws attention away from her weak chin.

Scion of the wealthy Cavendish family in the UK, Violetta had many advantages in life, and her parents made sure that she knew she was destined for greatness. Growing up a Cavendish, she was always surrounded by the presence of her ancestors; playwrights, scientists, philosophers, and above all: nobles. Her family's motto was drilled into her at a young age (Through caution; safety), and her rebellions were quiet and blessedly unremarked by the tabloids.

Her family's resources helped her to excel in school, and no one was particularly surprised when she was admitted to the Law Society of England and Wales. Her practice specialized in the matter of corporate mergers.

Notes [Countless]: Tritium's primary gas, hydrogen, gives her palette a bias toward violets and blues. Being a Celestial her body has no symmetry, giving it a very alarming appearance to humans. Without the constraint of gravity bladders, stomachs, arms, eyes, and mouths grew haphazardly—leaving Tritium without an obvious central body. Tritium was an early Second Wave implantation. Though chirurgeons were beginning to move away from the practice Forced Emergence was still common. She views humans as, at best, useful tools to help the Countless escape their current situation. Her Host's family can't understand where this cavalier attitude toward other people came from, and Violetta has subsequently become estranged from them. Her career, however, has flourished thanks to her mercenary approach and the politics of corporate deregulation taking hold. Tritium provided the vision and leadership necessary to get the Lunar Power Corporation off the ground; lending her expansive skills, resources, and contacts to the project.

Abyssal Sapiologist

Names(s): Ethylene, Lina Arbor; **Allegiance**: Symbiosis Collective; **Clade(Species)**: Kite(Abyssal); **Motion**: Eccentric; **Caste/Legacy**: Visionary/ Transhumanist

Attributes: Str 2; Dex 3; Sta 3; Cha 2; Man 1; App 3; Per [Dowsing] 5*; Int 3; Wit 3

Talents: Athletics 1, Brawl 1*, Dowsing 2, Empathy 2

Skills: Craft [Gardening] 2, Larceny 3, Pilot 3*, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Computer 2, Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Science [Biology] 2

Practices: Spring 2*, Wayfare 2

Theories: Sapiology 4*, Holography 1, Spatial Theory 1

Tempers: Zed 4, Ego 4, Radiation 3

Backgrounds: Rank 1, Relic [Xenoscanner] 3, Resources 1

Languages: English, American Sign Language

Merits: Linguistics: ASL [1]*

Flaws: Blackbox [4]

Notes [Host]: You'd be forgiven for thinking Lina is an unremarkable young woman at first glance. Her wispy blonde hair stands out against her sunburnt skin. Unconcerned with her appearance, her outfits are worn and stained with grass and dirt. Lina's most expressive feature is her eyes—silvery gray, and larger than is strictly usual. Due to the trouble caused by interfacing with mainstream American society, Lina is rarely without a notepad and a pen (If you're going to use her in a more modern time, Lina would probably use a smartphone or tablet instead).

Transitioning to adulthood was difficult for Lina. As a nonverbal adult in the 1970s, her options for education and employment were severely constrained. As a child she'd made friends with one of the groundskeepers at the University of Washington (where her speech therapy classes were). He fudged some of the paperwork to help Lina get in to the student worker landscaping program. Though it only lasted one semester before she was found out, Lina discovered that she loved working with plants.

After her Emergence, Lina started running a landscaping business out of a junker that probably shouldn't be on the road. Her Countless, it turns out, is a weirdo that has an affinity for biospheric life. Lina's professional focus is on shaping yards, gardens, and larger spaces into appealing environments that rely on native mosses and plants.

Notes [Countless]: Ethyl's primary gas, ethene, gives her Xenoform a noticeable bias toward reds. Her main body is egg-shaped, with a mouth at the tapered end. Ridges of little hair-like structures run vertically along her body from the mouth to the other end. At regular intervals along the cilia-ridges Ethyl has glowing eyes. Her mouth is ringed with a set of five tentacles, similar to a spider's pedipalps.

Ethyl's Joining was one of the first to use Natural Emergence. Unbeknownst to her, this legacy leaves her host to a blackbox—a strange tracking device that the Collective's thought police, or worse, could use should she step too far out of line. Today she serves the Symbiosis Collective as a scanner tech and amateur Sapiologist.

Aidoneus Soldier

Name(s): Samarskite, Sam, Basil Samarsky; **Allegiance**: Symbiosis Collective; **Clade(Species)**: Silicate(Aidoneus); **Motion**: Resonant; **Caste/Legacy**: Conscript/Tinkerer

Attributes: Str 3*; Dex 3; Sta [Extreme Effort] 5; Cha 2; Man 3; App 1; Per 3; Int 3; Wit 2

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics [Cardio] 4*, Brawl 2, Dowsing 2, Intimidation 3

Skills: Crafts 2, Pilot 1, Firearms [Energy Weapons] 4*, Melee 1, Survival 2

Knowledges: Computer 3*, Investigation 2*, Medicine 1

Practices: Dragon's Ire 2, Winter 2*

Theories: Fermion Sculpting 2, Field Theory 2, Holography 1

Tempers: Zed 4, Ego 4, Radiation 3

Backgrounds: Devices: Holographic Suppressor [1]*, Devices: Uhlenbeck Compactor [3], Devices: SV3F Dongle [3]*, Devices: Holographic Suppressor [3]*

Languages: English, ASL

Merits: Linguistics: ASL [1]*

Flaws: Forced Emergence [5],

Noncomformist [3]

Mutations: Zero Suit, Interface Ports

Refinements: Personal Protective Equipment, Dataspike

Notes [Host]: Sam's aesthetic could be described as "newsie linebacker". She's stocky enough that navigating smaller vehicles and certain furniture is a pain. Her closet is loaded with button up shirts, slacks, and plaid vests. Sam is almost never without her overstuffed satchel. It has an internal pocket that serves as the disguise for her Uhlenback Compactor.

Sam's parents migrated to the UK after World War II, bringing then-infant Sam with them. As part of the Windrush Generation, Sam was part of a cultural shift in Britain. As she approached adulthood, she saw the writing on the wall and migrated to the US.

Notes [Countless]: Sam is a standard model Aidoneus soldier: strong, well armored, and proficient with deepfire weapons. Her holographic suppressor hides most of her Tells, but her leg-armor appears to humans to be bulky leg-braces. Sam's holographic body completely eclipses her human form.

As an early Second Wave Countless, Sam's Joining included a (then) standard Forced Emergence. This had the unfortunate side-effect of suppressing her human instincts, and she never quite understood the necessity of meeting the societal expectations placed on her Host's body. As racial tensions worsened in the UK Sam decided that leaving would be safer for her than trying to navigate that particular mine-field. Fortunately, the Symbiosis Collective was there to help her establish a new life in Seattle.

Digital Native Debugger

Name(s): Kamacite, Shu Lin; **Allegiance**: Symbiosis Collective; **Clade(Species)**: Silicate(Digital Native); **Motion**: Prograde; **Caste/Legacy**: Boffin/ Voyager

Attributes: Str 3; Dex 4; Sta 3; Cha 3; Man 2; App 1; Per 1; Int 4; Wit 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Dowsing 1, Leadership 2

Skills: Crafts [Carpentry] 1, Pilot 2, Firearms 2

Knowledges: Academics [Information Architecture] 3, Computers 3, Investigation 2, Law 1, Politics 2, Technology 2

Practices: Chronos 2, Wayfare 1

Theories: Sapiology 1, Holography 1, Spatial Theory 3

Tempers: Zed 4, Ego 4, Radiation 3

Backgrounds: Devices: SV3F Dongle [3]*, Devices: Derez Disc [1]*, Devices: The Menehune Icon [5], UFO: The Menehune System*, Resources*

Languages: Mandarin, Hokkien, English

Merits: Linguistics [3]*

Flaws: Forced Emergence [5]

Mutations: Interface Ports [2]*

Refinements: M/MI, Metallic Skin (soak lethal holographic damage when not in Xenoform).

Notes [Host]: He has jet black hair salted with gray hairs and his face is in transition between the smooth chubbiness of youth and the more angular look of middle-age. One of Shu's ports is disguised as a cochlear implant over his left year, while the other appears to be an insulin pump attached to his abdomen.

Shu Lin was instrumental in developing the early Internet's communication protocols.

Notes [Countless]: Kamacite has shiny, metallic, skin with intricate crystalline patterns. The hard lines in his surface patterns pulse and glow like a heartbeat when he's actively using Zed or his M/MI. Shu's cochlear implant conceals his M/MI and its retractable access cable. When he manifests his Xenoform, his metallic skin emerges from the insulin port and quickly "spreads" to cover the rest of his human body.

As a digital pioneer, Kamacite's achievements as one of the Countless mirrored those of his Host. One of the original SV3F settlers, Kamacite has a (nearly) permanent seat on the system's council. None of the Countless natives of SV3F are aware that Kamacite has a second home on the Menehune System.

Readymade UFOs

A house is made with walls and beams;
a home is built with love and dreams.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Philadelphia Station

Holdings 6

Mission: The Philadelphia is an early proving-ground for the Symbiosis Collective's efforts to return to Voidspace. Aggressive upgrades are planned as the safety of theoretical technologies is tested. Ultimately, the station will function as a shipyard and launching pad for further exploration.

Archetype: Experimental Orbital Factory

Aspect: High Earth Orbit Research Station

Quirks: The Philadelphia's orbital maintenance thrusters are finicky—only 3 of 6 function properly at any given time. The Earthbound comms array doesn't function during severe weather, leaving the crew isolated for the duration of any terrestrial storm.

Appearance: The Earthly aspect of the Philadelphia is its communications array, floating on a massive series of pontoons on the surface of Lake Huron. The comms station was built by the Oceania Group as an early proof of concept for their floating city technology. Positioned far enough from any major settlement to avoid serious radio or light interference, the comms array is powered by a small number of advanced wind turbines and relays data back to the shore where human technicians pour over it.

The comms array hides a Transit Transceiver linked to the station.

The Heavenly face of the Philadelphia is a far cry from its spiritual parent, the Pyrean Solar Observatory. The facility has massive "wings" lined with vacuum energy collectors and point defense laser banks. The station's main body features an inflatable rotating ring—the subspacial habitat (Low Gravity Condition), and a zero gravity workshop (Microgravity Condition). The vacuum array harvests enough Zed to power the SLS, PDL, and a tiny Dross Condenser. While originally intended to defend from human-created debris that the attitude thrusters couldn't dodge, the PDLs have enough oomph to dissuade raiders and feral chimera. The habitat is cramped with only two astronauts in residence.

The Philadelphia's true value to the Countless comes with its fabrication workshop. While not large or complex enough to build other Subspacial facilities (yet!), the station's planned upgrades include an industrial size printing bay and larger crew habitat. Without further investment and development, the facility is capable of manufacturing and powering up Zed battery cells for transporting life-giving Zed to Earth. It may also replicate basic components that skilled engineers can use to create personal xenotechnological wonders.

Acquisition: Built by Collectivist Celestials, Aidoneus, and Enhanced human technicians

Hierarchy: Cooperative Science

Mission

Features: Condenser [1] (Vacuum Array), Point Defense System [1], Resources [2] (Microgravity Manufacturing), Security [3], Size [2], Subspace Life Support System [1], Transit Transceiver (Fixed link) [5].

Powers: EVA Vehicle Bay (lifeboat) [3]

Story Seeds

The Philadelphia Experiment

After an experiment involving exotic matter, contact with the station was lost. Having re-established the Transit link, the Symbiosis Collective sends a small team of engineers up to assess the situation and (hopefully) set things right. Unfortunately the experiment resulted in the small station being mirrored dozens of times in a Subspatial tesseract!

Can the rescue crew navigate the mirror universe versions of the Philadelphia and disable the experiment before it tears the station apart?

Refugee Crisis!

An ancient Pyrean solar-sail schooner approaches the Philadelphia, running a variety of flags up and down its four masts. The unidentified UFO doesn't respond to radio, but is clearly trying to communicate. When the crew allows the UFO to dock (or does a spacewalk to enter it) they discover an incapacitated unbound Countless!

Will they try to save this terminal Radiation victim, or just steal their ship?

A Mir Miss

A resupply transmission from the Surface is interrupted by a sudden storm. Its matter stream goes off-trajectory and the delivery materializes inside one of the Philadelphia's vacuum array wings, destroying it!

With only enough battery to run the station for another day, the station's two creature crew must decide to either repair the station (somehow!) or take their chances in the station's life-raft.

The Holy Palanquin

Holdings 5

Mission: The Holy Palanquin searches the Heavens for the lost goddess Chang'e.

Archetype: Manor

Aspect: Royal transport

Quirks: The ship's adjutant loves simple puzzles and will spend entirely too much time overthinking the solution. Every year the crew must return to Earth and answer prayers given during the mid-autumn festival to restore the Palanquin's fuel.

Appearance: The Sichuan launch site's mundane aspect is an abandoned farm in Sichuan, China. Its chimerical aspect sees its barn and farmland converted into a hanger and massive tether running into the heavens.

The Holographic face of the Holy Palanquin has two main components: the engine section and the habitation ring. The engine section most resembles the grain silo it's linked to--a long cylinder linked by elevators to the habitation ring. Containing the engine, reactor, and a small command center, and the rover bay, the engine section houses most of the mission's vital equipment.

The habitation ring is, unsurprisingly, a ring broken up into quarters, service rooms (including showers, kitchens and a rec room), and the ops section (including the control center, sensor suite, and repair workshop).

The lunar rover is about the size of an RV and built to safely transport the Palanquin's crew to, from, and on the lunar surface as they search for Chang'e. The rover can comfortably support 4 human-sized creatures for six hours and comes with two external vacuum-suit ports for quick(ish) changeling deployment to the lunar surface.

Acquisition: Built by current occupants

Hierarchy: Privileges are granted and retracted on a per use basis by the ship's chimerical adjutant. If one of the current occupants can make a convincing argument that a privilege's use supports their mission (locate and return Chang'e to Earth) the privilege is granted by the Palanquin's AI. If a compelling counter-argument is later constructed, the privilege is retracted.

Systems: Administrative Intellect [3], Life Support: Voidspace [1], Maneuverability [3], Security [1], Size [3]

Powers: EVA Vehicle Bay [3], Maneuverability: Landing Gear [1], Warning Call (Sensors) [1]

Story Seeds

Chang'e Mission

The ship's primary objective is to recover the lost immortal Chang'e. Chang'e fled to the moon during the mythic age and has (presumably) remained there since with a small retinue of chimerical servants. The Holy Palanquin and its crew have spent the last several years combing the lunar surface for any sign of Chang'e.

Though Houyi refuses to take shore leave, the rest of the crew cycles out every 3 months. This new crew has some radical ideas as to where Chang'e may have hidden herself. Will they pan out?

Highly Responsive to Prayers

The Holy Palanquin must return to Earth every year during the Mid-Autumn Festival. The crew must collect the prayers that will power the Holy Palanquin's Reactor for another year during this festival.

Climate change has hit Sichuan especially hard this year and the province's eponymous rivers have nearly dried up. Famine stalks the countryside, and the Lunar Festival's prayers this year have taken a distasteful, desperate, flavor. What will the Palanquin's crew do?

Harvest Moon

The Palanquin's EVA crew comes across an abandoned lunar research facility overgrown with, of all things, plants! Investigation reveals that this was a secret human effort to develop plants that could grow in the lunar regolith. Clearly, they succeeded. The cavernous facility is in a low-power emergency mode. What happened here? Where did the facility's crew go?

Gargano Island

Holdings 4

Mission: Survive

Archetype: Prehistoric Glade

Aspect: Miocene island home of giant creatures

Quirks: Gargano Island is an Echo of the past; home of a motley of Ancestors. Though it is an island, its Shallowing leads to the Foresta Umbra in modern-day Italy.

Appearance: The Superficial end of Gargano's Shallowing is a copse of ancient oaks deep within the Gargano

National Park. Passing through the Shallowing into the Shadow, the landscape changes immensely. The forest itself loses all indication of human meddling. Emerging from the forest lost travelers find themselves on an island in the middle of a vast sea. Massive storms mar the horizons; Maelstroms on the edge of the Underworld. On bad days the Spectres' moaning pierces the entire island. Massive cliffs watch over the seas and host a variety of birds. The beaches (where there are beaches) are littered with ghostly debris vomited up from the Underworld—parts of tanks, ancient ruins, bits of burned books, and perhaps a copper obolus.

Acquisition: Chrysalis creation

Hierarchy: None; the Ancestors whose Echo this is share it.

Features: Balefire (Sacred Glade) 2, Size 5, Passages 2

Powers: Resonant Dreams (+2 to all survivalism-related checks) [2]

Story Seeds

The Wealth of Ancient Cedars

Following a Maelstrom, Gargano is beset by boats of Stygian Guildsmen hunting resources for their Kingdom. The Foresta Umbra is simultaneously threatened in Superficial Reality by an national initiative to “create jobs” by harvesting the country’s protected regions.

Outflanked and outnumbered, how will the Ancestors who belong to Gargano Island cope with these twin threats?

Invasive Species

A neighboring Echo in the Shadow has fallen to the Great Dying, yet its snake chimera survived aboard a raft of debris. Gargano’s fauna have no defenses against the snakes, and are devastated by the snakes’ population explosion.

What will the island’s Ancestors decide to do? Gargano’s ecosystem must be preserved, but wiping out the snake chimera will accelerate the Great Dying.

Siren’s Overture

A Selkie arrives on Gargano’s shores. She’s been authorized by a changeling organization to offer a treaty, of sorts, to the “Fae” of the island: Join our nation, accept an outpost, and benefit from our protection. Once the Ancestors would have chased an insulting guest off Gargano, but the Great Dying has shaken them to their core.

Will they negotiate being annexed by a Changeling organization, or continue to face the Great Dying alone (and potentially make an enemy of the Selkie’s group)?

Incomplete Kodiak

Holdings 4

Mission: Exploration and adventure!

Archetype: Voidship

Aspect: Solar sail ship

Acquisition: Chrysalis Creation

Hierarchy: Captain Keen has the ship’s command codes.

Features: Size [3], Maneuverability: Solar Sails [Voidspace] [4], Maneuverability: Zed Booster [Biospheric Space] [1]

Powers: Life support: Voidspace [1], Variable Passageway: Airlock [1]

Appearance: Something of a Frankenstein creation, the Kodiak takes influence from many of the indigenous cultures Kate & Hoheoapbess have experienced. The Kodiak's main body was based loosely on Kate's understanding of Makah whaling ships. Carved into the heart of a massive cedar and coated with dozens of layers of lacquer refined from Dreamstuff, it is proof against the void and the stresses of entering and leaving the atmosphere, and provides enough space for a crew of six and their provisions. Apart from its airlock the ship's livable space is undifferentiated, with hammocks, provision restraining nets, and the ship's equipment positioned haphazardly.

While the Kodiak has a powerplant suitable for turning Zed into thrust, Keen's design was strongly influenced by her exposure to indigenous Hawaiian seafaring. Keen built the Kodiak with retractable masts and massive sails to catch solar, Anthropic, and Deep Radiation Tides. Once Kodiak is safely away in Voidspace, its pilot can deploy the sails and steer the ship without relying on the ship's Zed-hungry ascent engine. With its sails deployed Kodiak looks like a colorful fish or a kite.

Quirks: Captain Keen built the Kodiak during her Chrysalis. In the madness of her Dream Dance, Keen got a serious case of go-fever and left many key systems incomplete. One of its four solar sails has a malfunctioning actuator and doesn't unfurl, its life support system is capable of supporting human life (but only just barely), and its navigation computer is a rope-core system capable of getting to 'Tłisukdakain and back, but nothing else.

Due to its jammed sail the Kodiak twirls at speed and requires constant manual course correction. [Drive: Piloting check difficulty 4].

Federation of Free Dreams Sailship

Kodiak Model 3

Holdings 4

Mission: TBD (but usually exploration, adventure, or resource harvesting)

Archetype: Voidship

Aspect: Solar sail ship

Acquisition: (Usually constructed as part of the owners' initiation into the Federation of Free Dreams)

Hierarchy: TBD by crew

Quarters: 6 Optimal

Features: Size [3], Maneuverability: Solar Sails [Voidspace] [5]

Powers: Life support: Voidspace [1], Variable Passageway: Airlock [1], Self-Weaving Ropecore Computer [+2 dice to navigation and maneuvering rolls] [2], Harpoon [Broadside gun that fires a harpoon and high-tensile cable capable of piercing ship hulls] [1]

Appearance: Free Dream sailships in flight are characterized by their colorful solar sails. While specific designs vary based on the creators' aesthetic, most resemble sleek kites or fish with beautiful multicolored solar sails. Standard model sailships are constructed at 'Tłisukdakain's shipyard lack the capacity to withstand Biospheric Space's high pressure environment. These are typically used for trade and hunting chimera between Free Dream settlements, though fleets have been raised as makeshift militias.

The Montauk

Rhyolitic Drillship

Holdings 5

Mission: Uncover the fate of missing Port Mohole carriers.

Archetype: Drillship

Aspect: Hadean Construction Vehicle

Acquisition: Mission Assignment

Hierarchy: TBD

Quarters: 2 Optimal (4 max)

Features: Size [2], Maneuverability [Drill Turbines] [Hadean Space] [5], Sanctuary [High Pressure and High Temperature Hull] [2]

Powers: Life support [Hadean Space] [1], Variable Passageway: Airlock [1], Utility: [Welding Arm] [primal fire] [1], Utility: [Magnet Arm] [attract objects] [1]

Appearance: Originally used in the construction of Port Mohole's docks, the modifications needed to make the Montauk safe for longer excursions aren't pretty. The ship's hull is reinforced with mismatched thermal and radiation shielding plates scavenged from other projects. Its maneuvering turbines were replaced with spares from a larger basaltic class shipping vessel. These three engines dwarf the ship.

No real effort was spent upgrading the ship's interior. Like other Silicate construction vehicles, the Montauk has about the same interior space as a small studio apartment. Two beds and a toilet can be pulled out of the walls when needed. The ship's command stations occupy most of the available space, featuring three separate consoles: The helm, the welding arm controls, and the magnet arm controls. Provisions are kept in a small walk-in refrigerator.

With creature comforts at a premium, the ship's life support would normally keep the environment livable, but barely. The increased power output of the Montauk's larger engines mandated an upgrade to the ship's cooling system, allowing engineers to address laborers' main complaint about HCV--the Montauk's interior is cooled to an uncomfortable 27 degrees Celsius, instead of the standard HCV target interior temperature of 35c.

Standard Model HCV

Super-Rhyolitic Drillship

Holdings 3

Mission: Investigate missing Port Mohole carriers

Archetype: Drillship

Aspect: Hadean Construction Vehicle

Acquisition: Typically by requisition, assignment, or sentence.

Hierarchy: 4 person crew divided into day shift and night shift; Helmsman and operator on each shift.

Quarters: 2 Optimal (4 max)

Features: Size [2], Maneuverability [Drill Turbines] [Hadean Space] [1]

Powers: Life support [Hadean Space] [1], Variable Passageway: Airlock [1], Utility: [Welding Arm] [primal fire] [1], Utility: [Magnet Arm] [attract objects] [1], Utility: [Printer]

Appearance: HCV crews are a unique breed. The work is dangerous, the environment is hellish, and the hours suck. The work is typically reserved for roustabouts and other Countless waste. Standard model HCVs have a four man crew assigned to two shifts. The beds are intended to be hotbeded, but you try sleeping in 35 degrees while your ship is twisting some huge panel into place. Crews will often underprovision themselves to make room in the fridge to rest.

The thermal and radioactive insulation on HCVs is only sufficient for very shallow missions. If, for some reason, an HCV ventures deeper into the Rhyolitic layer, the crew will be exposed to dangerous Deep Tides. [+1 Truth and one level of lethal damage per hour spent in Rhyolitic space.]

Lunar Power Corporation Site Delta

Holdings 3

Mission: Harvest Lunar Resources and Provide Habitat for Endangered Heavenly Chimera

Archetype: Restored Lunar Colony

Aspect: Outpost

Acquisition: Survival Saga

Hierarchy: TBD by crew

Features: Size [5], Condenser (Tritium Refinery) [1]

Powers: Vehicle Bay [*], Life support: Void [1], Passageway: Airlock [1], Resources: Hydroponics [1]

Quirks: Requires periodic resupply from Earth, Delta Administrative Intellect handles all of the facility's passive features (refining, hydroponics, security, data management, communications).

Appearance: LPC Delta was originally designed as a satellite regolith harvesting and tritium refining facility for the Lunar Power Corporation's primary site. Following Yùtù 2's arrival and subsequent decimation of the colony, the surviving crew exhibited incredible tenacity and ingenuity in retrofitting Delta to be nearly self-sufficient.

In its present state Delta's habitation dome remains basically unmodified from its original designs. Large enough to comfortably house a crew of 8, the dome is divided into a college dorm-style communal living arrangement. Crew quarters are divided into 4 bedrooms with one bunk-bed each. The beds are hide-away style beds that retract into the walls. Drawers under the beds provide foot-locker storage for crew. Each bedroom has a hygiene alcove with shower and toilet. Remaining hab facilities include a gym, dining facilities, and command-and-control cabin for the facility's automated equipment.

Outbuildings include an array of 8 regolith processors, an automated tritium refinery, an automated hydroponics facility, and an EVA rover garage. The garage houses a small number of short-range (6km) construction rovers, a single long range (30km) supply crawler, and a single long range scout rover.

SVF3 System

Holdings [Plot-Level]

Mission: Serve as a global hub of Digital/Analog commerce.

Archetype: Thorpe

Aspect: Dreaming Net Hub System

Features: Passages [5], Sanctuary [5], Size [5]

Powers: Variable Passageways [5]

Quirks: One minute on the Surface is equivalent to about an hour in SVF3. Countless try to limit their time spent "online" to avoid rapidly aging. Anyone who enters the Dreaming Net without a functional PID, Icon, or mastery of Chronos is incompatible with Digital Subspace and cannot function. Some Netizens find these statues and mercifully Surface them, while others simply leave them as a cautionary tale against losing one's Icon.*As with other Systems with admins from the Surface digital chimera generally avoid SV3F.

Appearance: SV3F is an archipelago of islands (sometimes called Sectors) in a desolate region of the energy sea. These islands pop in and out of existence when their dongles are connected or disconnected from an internet-capable computer. Each individual island resembles the heart of the Joined who summoned it.

Acquisition: Formatted by the Digital Natives during the First Wave.

Hierarchy: SVF3 Committee elections are held every 3 months (meat time). At these meetings priorities are set for defense, expansion, and maintenance of the System. Smaller Subnets (motleys) form between Netizens of the System with compatible interests. While open warfare between Subnets is discouraged, only activities that significantly impair the three priorities of the SVF3 Committee provoke official sanction.

Antagonists

and Other Debris

You don't really understand an antagonist until you understand why he's a protagonist in his own version of the world.

—John Rogers

Botnet 1

The First Acquisitor's Last Expedition

Bismuth Telluride was a true pioneer—she and the other three SVF3 Admins pushed back the frontier of Digital Subspace, creating the first and brightest bastion of civilization in Subspace after the Tidal Event. She was the first and longest lasting Acquisitor committee chair. Dedicated to plumbing farther and deeper into Digital Reality than any had gone and returning with exotic treasures and chimera no Countless had ever seen before, Subnet: Acquisitions under BiTe had a reputation for being slightly mad. Since her disappearance Acquisitions lost its free-wheeling focus on exploration and exploitation. Current Acquisitors are more like traders and robber barons than pirates and explorers.

At first when First Acquisitor BiTe's final expedition missed a resupply deadline no one took note. She probably ran headlong into an incredible hazard out on the virgin Energy Sea and would return soon with some bizarre souvenir and an even less credible story about how she got it. But as the cycles ticked by the System's Netizens began to worry. The Acquisitors launched several recovery expeditions—some of which returned, but none had any news of the First Acquisitor's fate. Before heading out themselves to look for her, the three remaining System Administrators delegated their admin privileges to the SVF3 Committee.

Bismuth Telluride travelled so far from the Surface that she began to hear Harmony's song to itself. The severed fragment of Harmony deep within Bite's Implanted Countless longed to rejoin the rest of itself. A sailor bewitched by sirens, Bite travelled toward her own demise. As she drew closer to Harmony the Black annihilated her Anthropic Radiation and flooded her with Harmonic Truth. Without the calcifying influence of humanity, "Bismuth Telluride" became less herself and more Harmony. But for some tattered shreds of individuality, she might have returned to Harmony. Instead she remains on the edge of Subspace, endlessly executing her last two contradictory impulses: 1. Become Harmony, 2. Survive.

And there BiTe remains, torn between her last two wishes. No one knows who first blundered into her madness, but that accident was the genesis of the Botnet 1 virus. Bite tore apart the Acquisitors who approached her to get their Zero Point Energy (which she could use to propel herself closer to Harmony) and the Anthropic Radiation (to help her remain an individual). Left with the empty shells of those Silicates, the nascent True Prophet of Harmony found that she could use them.

Imbued with her will, the Mockingbirds

went back into Digital Reality to bring the Prophet what she needed—more Zed and more Radiation. The most efficient packages of those two energies are, of course, other Countless.

Mockingbirds

“NORDIC WALKING IS VERY GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH!”

“MY FANTASY FOOTBALL TEAM WILL NEVER RECOVER FROM THIS INJURY!”

“BUT HER EMAILS!”

"I WOULDN'T ALLOW THAT ROTE IN MY GAME!"

—Mockingbirds discussing amongst themselves

Mockingbirds’ mundane appearance is identical to that of any other Silicate (even those mockingbirds who weren’t originally Silicates). Their Xenoforms are disquieting. Where standard Silicates are essentially human with techno-organic xenotechnology “growing” out of them, Mockingbirds have no apparent xenotech Refinements. Instead, their human parts have taken on technological qualities: their skin resembles sleek body-armor, their eyes have barely visible HUD holograms flashing in front of them, their teeth are made of cobalt, etc. The mockingbird Xenoform is clearly inhuman, but elegantly so. The aesthetic is sleek, powerful, and almost fluid. At a distance Mockingbirds may be mistaken for particularly artful Dougalsidhe.

Mockingbirds are powerhouses—the “improvements” the Botnet makes to their already formidable Joined forms makes them devastating agents of its will. Usually equipped with combat-ready enhancements (represented by mastery of combat Arts like Dragon’s Ire and Pyretics) engaging mockingbirds without significant preparation and tactical advantage is not recommended. Topping it off, they are all lost to Harmony and can infect nearby changelings with their Truth. When a changeling activates a Mockingbird bedlam adjustment or triggers a point of Mockingbird Nightmare Fuel they begin to hear Botnet 1’s directives to its Mockingbirds. Resisting Botnet’s commands requires an Ego check against the changeling’s current Imbalance.

Mockingbird: Lanthanide Models

This mockingbird series is deployed when stealth and subtlety are key. Less physically imposing than Babbitts, Lanthanides are capable (if awkward) shadow operatives, particularly in Analog Reality.

Dice Pools: Physical: 5, Social: 3, Mental: 5

Practices: Chicanery 5, Legerdemain 3

Theories: Sapiology 5, Fields 3, Space 3

Tempers: Zed 5, Ego 1, Rads 1, Truth 6

Mockingbird: Babbitt Models

Due to their improved offensive capabilities and durability Babbitts are more often deployed to Digital Reality than Lanthanides. Botnet 1's shock troops lack the Lanthanide model's ability to blend in, leaving them dangerously exposed to Anthropic Hostility on the Surface.

Dice Pools: Physical: 10, Social 2, Mental 5

Practices: Dragon’s Ire 5, Pyretics 2

Theories: Fields 3, Fermion Sculpting 3, Temporal 3

Tempers: Zed 6, Ego 1, Rads 1, Truth 6

Concordian Knights

The elite forces of the Kingdom. Guardians of the Cruithne Naming ritual.

Dice Pools: Physical: 5, Social 5, Mental 5

Arts: Dragon's Ire 3, Primal 5

Realms: Fae 4, Actor 2, Nature 2

Tempers: Glamour 5, Willpower 4, Banality 4, Nightmare Fuel / Bedlam Adjustments 2

Eiluned Sorcerers

A circle of Namers deployed by the Kingdom for Operation: Name & Claim. If their bodyguards seem to be faultering, they will turn their Arts against the attackers.

Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 7, Mental 8

Arts: Naming 5, Sovereign 2, Winter 3

Realms: Fae 5, Actor 3, Nature 3, Scene 3, Time 2

Tempers: Glamour 7, Willpower 6, Banality 4, Nightmare Fuel/Bedlam Adjustments 3

Kate Miller & Hohoeapbess are
Captain Keen
in

Roping the Goose

After their dropships left for York, Keen turned to Ava.

"Do you honestly think they have a chance?" they asked.

"At success?" Ava sighed. "No. Even without their High King, the settler kingdom has the resources and the numbers to defeat whatever and whoever we can muster. The best we can hope for is a costly delay."

"Then we need to make that delay into something," Keen said. "You're a Namer. How can we make their ritual fail without confronting them directly?"

"If we changed 'Tłisukdakain's Name before they could their ritual would fail," Ava shook her head. "We don't have that kind of time."

"What kind of information is encoded in a Name? Is there something we could change without needing as much time?"

"What do you mean?"

"What if we painted it?"

"That doesn't matter. We would need a fundamental change to the identity of the place. The last time that happened was when 'Tłisukdakain changed from your campsite to the center of the Alliance of Free Dreams. Names are more about the symbolism than the material, see?"

Keen looked out the landing bay's window. The Alliance's meager scrambled drop-pods were already a cloud of gnats against the Earth's blue-white canvas. In a few moments the sun would rise and the flare off the atmospheric horizon would blind them to the drop-ships' progress.

"What if we changed 'Tłisukdakain's relationship with the Waking World?"

Sam emerged from Hydra's airlock.

"We're tethered," she said.

Okay, Ethyl Signed. *I'll lift off*.

Ethyl moved in 'Tlisukdakain's microgravity with a grace Sam envied. When she reached the helm her arms flitted and flicked, turning on the ship's gear controls, positioning them at just the right angle for Hydra's little engine to push off the asteroid and into the current they'd need. Sam plugged herself into Hydra's computer core to monitor the fleet's progress.

"Looks like everyone's nearly in position," Sam said. "Alacritous Missive's tether failed, but otherwise we should get the green-light soon."

All around 'Tłisukdakain the Alliance of Free Dreams' fishermen, explorers, and traders lifted off the tiny moon, trailing tethers that anchored them to their home. Many of these ships were Hydra's brothers and sisters, designed that built upon Keen's engineering successes with the Kodiak. Almost as many were unique—created by other "Changelings" and Countless drawn to 'Tłisukdakain by Captain Keen and Ava Littlewing's promises. A significant minority of these used NWIC's IFF codes, marking them as ships crewed by the Enhanced human entourage that orbitted Ava and Keen.

The command to begin pulling 'Tłisukdakain out of orbit rang through Hydra's data connection like a bell. Ethyl eased Hydra into the turbulent river of solar winds, Anthropic Radiation, and Zero Point Energy near the Earth. The ship's tiny computer overloaded and dropped tasks to devote more resources to critical processes. Sam sorted the error log for bad calls.

"Yeah, we might want life support," she took direct control of the SLS.

Though Sam wasn't as good as the rope computer at running any particular ship system, experience had taught her that Hydra didn't like distractions when it was handing complicated work. Some day they'd figure out how to convince it that life support was always a priority process.

"T minus three minutes to solar orbit injection," Sam announced.

Hydra, and a dozen other Free Dream ships, strained to pull 'Tłisukdakain out of the Waking World's Anthropic current. None of these ships were built for the task. Most of them were fishing canoes, scouts, and small trading ships. None of them were equipped with the kind of power plant needed to produce enough impulse to push an asteroid out of Earth's orbit. Instead, they caught the Heavens' tides with their delicate sails, and pulled together. When one ship got caught in an eddy, its crew had to hope that enough of the others were still pulling to make up the difference.

Problems were expected. Voidspace problems were life-threatening. Ethyl and Sam had their vacuum suits on—they could both survive void exposure for a little while if they shifted to Xenoform, but not for long enough to make it back to dock.

"Bde Maka Ska's tether snapped," Sam announced. "Bde Maka Ska is tumbling in the solar current."

Ethyl trimmed the sails to compensate for the lost collective force. The computer received an updated heading table from Keen for the remaining ships.

"Adjusted projections put as at T minus 5 minutes to solar injection. Hydra thinks we need to cut delta to avoid hull rupture, but the injection won't work if the fleet throttles back any more."

Sam saw Ethyl hesitate for just a moment, but she did not decrease their thrust.

"Agree," Sam dropped life support and took over navigation from Hydra's computer. "Better hold your breath."

Anticipating full hull rupture, both Ethyl and Sam shifted to Xenoform.

Ava considered the dichotomies of her home. Early on, the Free Dream leadership council had forbidden interference with the surface ecosystem. Apart from Keen's campsite, which predated the edict, the only violations she knoew of were the harpoons and tethers left behind by Operation: Rope the Goose. Through her voidsuit, Ava touched the lichen-covered harpoon in front of her.

"Three months later and 'Tłisukdakain's ecosystem is already recovering from what we did."

"It wouldn't have recovered at all from what they," Keen waved at the receeding Earth, "were doing. Cruithne would have been some other thing entirely from 'Tłisukdakain."

Research and harvesting 'Tłisukdakain's surface chimera were tightly controlled to protect them from Banality contamination, but Ava and Keen (and others, they suspected) found ways to slip out of the underground outpost for little "nature walks" from time to time. As welcoming as they were able to make their settlement, there would always be something to be said for green grass (or in this case, moss) and running water.

'Tłisukdakain's Free Dream population lived in space hollowed out from the asteroid's heart. From the Surface the only evidence of the settlement's existence was the cave the Allianced used to berth their ships. From that port 'Tłisukdakain's underground environment opened up—A system of tunnels and caves played host to changelings, Dreamers, and some of these strange "Countless" changelings without need for voidsuits. Mines provided construction materials and ice, while Dreamer advances in regolith processing and microgravity farming allowed them to nearly feed themselves (as well as providing oxygen and more construction materials). Though the asteroid was geologically dead, subterrenean temperature differences between the sunny and dark sides allowed the settlement to rely on a sort of geothermal power.

"We live in 'Tłisukdakain's heart," Ava looked at the Earth—Imperceptibly moving away from them. Over the next 50 years the Earth would gradually diminish until the only thing to differentiate it from any other star in the sky would be its position on the horizon. "Do you think it will change us?"

"It changed me the first time I landed here," Keen's voice crackled over the helmet radio.

"The settlers know that 'Tłisukdakain is ours, but is that enough?"

"What do you mean?"

"We can't bring everyone here," Ava sighed.

"Let's go back inside," Keen took Ava's hand. "You're getting maudlin and we still have so many more wonderful things to build."

Changeling: Countless Dreams

What Does the Future Hold?

Technology is the Endless Winter's herald
the future holds darkness and death for Changelings
the Dreaming will die
These are lies
told by Banality-ridden Changelings
and bitter Gladelings
who see the ISS streak by at night
or look down into the Earth's magma glow
or contemplate machines' potential
and fail to see the Dreaming

The Countless forge
new homes for themselves in Subspace
and a harmonious relationship with Humanity
from Dreams of the Future